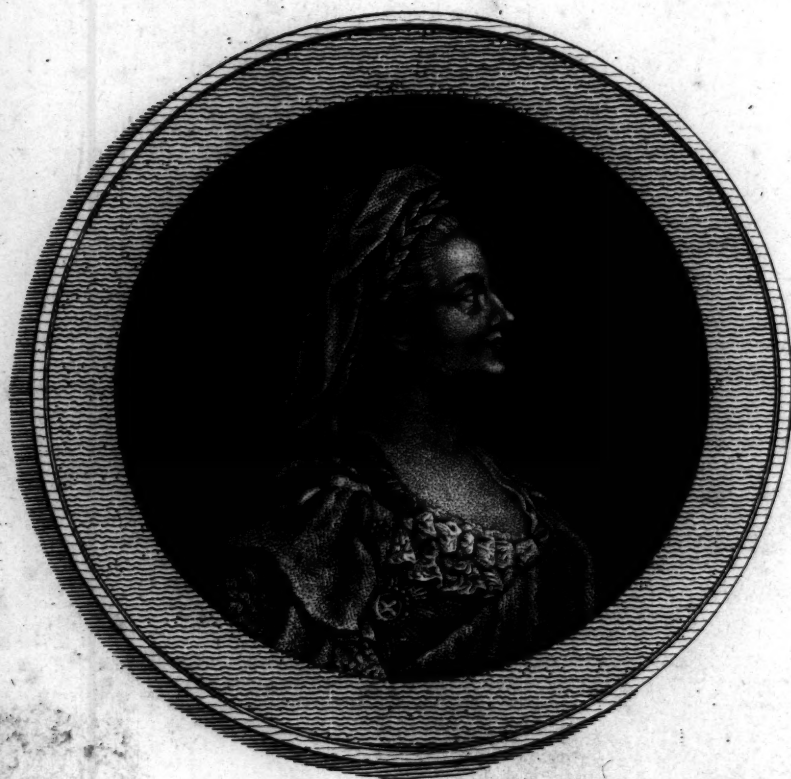


CATHERINE II.





CATHERINE II.

A  
HISTORY,  
OR  
ANECDOTES  
OF THE  
*REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA,*  
IN THE YEAR  
1762.

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

M. DE RULHIÈRE. (b. b. de)

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1797.

HISTORICAL

OF

ANTHROPOLOGY

OF THE

BRITISH MUSEUM



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## NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

M. Rulhiere was at Petersburg during the events which seated Catharine II. on the throne of Russia; he wrote the history of them at the solicitation of the Countess d'Egmont, daughter to the Mareschal de Richlieu, whom he had accompanied into his government, in quality of gentleman attendant. Soon after his return to Paris, his manuscript, which he had read aloud in various companies, acquired some reputation. The events which had taken place in Russia were still the subject of conversation, and every one, as is usually the case, re-

lated

lated them his own way. The Court, having an interest in being made acquainted with a circumstantial detail, which could be depended upon, of the intrigues which had placed Catharine on the throne of her husband, likewise wished to hear them read.

It was not long before the Empress got intelligence of this; she gave orders to her agents at Paris to employ all means possible to procure the suppression of this Work; they tempted the Author with very considerable pecuniary offers, which were refused. Failing of success here, they tried to employ the strong hand of authority. Application was made, for this purpose, to the Duke d'Aiguillon, at that time prime minister. Mr. de Sartine, lieutenant

lieutenant of police, sent for Mr. Rulhiere; he informed him that he had received orders to demand his manuscript; and thought to intimidate him into compliance by threatening him with the Bastille. But he who had resisted corruption was proof against menaces also. He replied to the Lieutenant de Police, that they might send him to the Bastille, nay force his manuscript from him, but that it would prove labour lost, because it was engraven on the table of his memory.

These threats produced nothing. Monsieur, the King's brother, having been informed of the affair, took the Author under his protection, appointed him his principal secretary, and not long after procured for him the place



of historiographer of foreign affairs, with orders to write the history of the troubles in Poland, and permission to search for what materials he might stand in need of, in the office for foreign affairs. Nay the Duke de Choiseul sent him to reside some time in that country.

The agents of the Empress renewed their importunities: they went so far as to offer him thirty thousand livres, if he would but suppress a few touches, the publication of which might be injurious to the reputation of their sovereign; this too he refused, but assured them, on his word of honour, that the work should not be printed during the life of the Empress.

M. de Montmorin, on the death of  
M. Rulhiere,

M. Rulhiere, in 1791, engaged his brother to wait on M. Grim, the Empress's confidential envoy at Paris, with an assurance that he could turn that manuscript to very good account: he fulfilled with strict fidelity his brother's intentions; and, though the public papers several times announced the appearance of a History of the Revolution in Russia, the heirs have waited till the death of the Empress has set them at liberty to dispose of the manuscript deposited in their hands.

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*N. B. Care has been taken to write the Russian names as they are pronounced.*

Mr. Hallam, in 1837, engaged in  
Russia to write on the Crime, the Em-  
press's confidential envoy at Paris, with  
an assurance that he could obtain the  
manuscript to very good account: he  
fulfilled with it, of fidelity his brother's  
intentions; and though the public ap-  
pears several times announced the ap-  
pearance of a history of the Revolu-  
tion in Russia, the debt has never  
till the death of the Empress has not  
been at liberty to dispose of the ma-  
nuscript deposited in their hands.

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M. B. Carr has been taken to the  
Russian nation as they are pronounced.



# PREFACE;

OR

## EPISTLE DEDICATORY

TO THE

*Countess d'Egmont the Younger,*

*DUTCHEES OF GUELDRES, &c.*

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MADAM,

**T**HIS work belongs to you: I had, it is true, employed my utmost exertions to unfold the most secret intrigues of the event which is the subject of it; but I had no intention to write the history of it: a declaration of your will simply determined me to undertake it; and even in the style  
which

which I have adopted, having no model before me, your taste served me as a guide.

In giving a relation to you and Count d'Egmont, on returning from my travels, of the revolution which took place at Petersburg in 1762, I was emboldened by that gaiety so natural and so becoming, which scarcely ever forsakes you, to introduce into the recital of a terrible event all the circumstances, sometimes humorous, which relate to the manners of the Russian Nation; and I felt at the time that this relation, with these manners, was the real point of view in which that event ought to be contemplated. The frequent questions which you both put to me, directed, as it were, my

my recital, and obliged me to blend playfulness and pleasantry in narrations the most serious and important. Such is, in truth, the character of this history, in which it was your wish that I should preserve the spirit, nay the very tone, which that conversation had transfused into my narrative.

Perhaps, indeed, an event so extraordinary may require a singular species of narration. The importance of the different interests, for in the present case a great Empire is concerned, the singularity of the action, the horror of the catastrophe, the name of Catharine, II. communicate, it must be owned, both grandeur and solemnity to this revolution; but the frivolity of the intrigues which put it in motion,

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the



the licentiousness of Russian manners, and the puerilities which brought down destruction on the head of the unfortunate Emperor Peter III. could not be related in a serious and uniformly grave style: to represent them by general touches, as that style must have required, would have been to strip them of all credibility: the necessity of painting them in detail, and in their proper colouring, if I may use the expression, must have obliged the gravest Author in the world to descend to the tone of memoirs the most familiar; and in relating those risible anecdotes, unless he had sometimes appeared to laugh the first, his gravity would have rendered himself ridiculous.

Certain criticks have it in their  
power

power to tax me with never having, in a narrative like this, employed the names of virtue and criminality ; with never having given to any one principal action in the piece a single epithet which could make it considered as either good or bad. I thought only of painting ; but that manner which, in the hands of the poets, produces such happy effects, is not sufficient for the historian. He who wishes to transmit to posterity, the memory of the good and of the evil which he has observed in his own times, ought not to trust entirely to the impression which a simple recital will make on the minds of his Readers. He must not consult sentiments of admiration, of interest, or of pity, in order to form a judgment

of all human actions. A certain greatness is sometimes found to blend with vicious actions. Genius may be carried into criminal conduct, agreeableness into frailties, and heroism into fatal imprudences. It is too true that, in such supposed cases, sentiment would be a very unfaithful judge, and this is in general the source of so many defective judgments which the generality of readers never fail to carry into the study of history. But in reciting a revolution still quite recent, it was of essential importance to guard against inspiring my readers with anything like distrust. A single epithet more or less rigorous would have excited against me a suspicion of partiality. Besides, when I related to  
you,



you, for the first time, this long series of anecdotes, necessarily interwoven with each other, from the relation which they have to the same event, I took care to display them in their true light, so as not to lay a bias on your opinion. But I studied with still greater attention, all the movements narrated with a sentiment of enthusiasm, weakness with indulgence, crimes with horror, and vices with some strokes of ridicule.

One of the best lessons which we have received from an excellent master in the art of writing, is to impress it upon ourselves that our productions are to be read and judged by the greatest of mankind, even by such as have immortalized themselves by their  
genius :

genius : by figuring to ourselves, when we assume the pen, that we are in their presence ; by asking ourselves, What would Plato, what would Tacitus say, were they to hear this work read ? I declare that instead of representing those great men to myself, in writing this history solely for your use, it is in your presence I imagine myself writing. I thus followed, in a manner less severe, the spirit of that lesson. But seeing I have imposed it upon myself as a law, through the whole of this narrative, to paint and not to judge, permit me, Madam, in this place to disclose my general opinion of the manners which I have painted.

There is not upon the face of the  
globe

globe a power more absolute than that of the sovereigns of Russia: through the whole extent of that Empire, their will is the only law; all morality is summed up in one word, obedience. We shall see, at the same time, in this very thing, the extreme misery of their condition, and how their power, while it transgresses all the bounds prescribed to human beings, destroys itself, and feels itself much more miserably limited on every side, being obliged to obey the very instruments which it employs, the soldiery, superstition, public prejudices. It is, therefore, from downright infatuation, that most princes employ themselves in forging fetters of this sort: they forget that in ceasing to respect the inclinations



clinations of a free people, they must sooner or later become slaves to the caprices of an ignorant populace.

Certain traces of sagacity and courage scattered over this history, ought not to dazzle the reader; and if any one has conceived esteem for a nation which produces such men, I entreat him to observe that what he admires is to be ascribed to habits of conspiracy, to the hope of rapidly acquiring fortune, and that these convulsions are always momentaneous. The whole state is actually weighed down under the pressure of the government; terror reigns universally; mistrust fills the throne, but hope is at the gates of the palace. The first soldier who can look at the gallows without fear, sees

no

no bounds set to his ambition; and certain strong spirits placed between the lowness of slavery and the audaciousness of conspiracy, necessarily become atrocious. Such were the manners which began to shew themselves at Rome, under the earlier Emperors. It seemed to me difficult to give credit to the historian of those deplorable times; but no sooner had I arrived in Russia, than every scene which Tacitus has painted, assumed in my eyes a new character of probability. The Russians, in the progress of their civilization, conveyed to me a faint idea of what Rome was become in her decline. This mournful conformity struck my eyes whichever way I turned. That superstitious and phrenetic

tamb

c

respect

respect which the Roman Emperors exacted to their images never produced any thing more memorable than the following Russian anecdote which took place but the other day. In the year 1734, when the city of Petersburg was almost entirely destroyed by fire, the Empress Anne being then on the throne, the quarter which was first burnt down, had a communication with a wooden palace, by a triumphal arch likewise of wood, and the only means of preserving the rest of the city, was to cut down that miserable monument: but the Russian general who commanded the party employed in extinguishing the flames, having observed an A on that arch, the first letter of the Empress's name, durst



durst not presume to touch that sacred symbol : he dispatched a courier to court, which was then eight leagues off ; and while they were waiting for his return, the fire forced its way by means of this communication, and reduced to ashes the palace and the city.

I admit that the sovereigns of Russia, with the assistance of the foreigners whom they invited into their country, have endeavoured, during several of the last reigns, to civilize their subjects, whereas the Neros and the Domitians purposely exerted their whole power to restore barbarism. But an observation of much importance is here to be made ; those ancient tyrants, become the execration of the human race, were consistent in their destructive efforts,

whereas the sovereigns of Russia, with a disposition to polish their nation, in aggravating the power of despotism, have effected, with prodigious exertions, two things absolutely inconsistent. According to the expression of a sage magistrate of Geneva: "Where-  
"ever the great majority of a people  
"shall be reduced to have no will or  
"opinion of their own, it will be ne-  
"cessary to keep them in profound  
"ignorance." This being an incontestible truth, what judgment are we to form of that enterprize of the Czars, celebrated by so many panegyrists? Is it not evidently similar to the design long ago formed by Tiberius, when he insisted on being servilely obeyed by a Senate which re-  
tained

tained illumination and dignity, a design which has been transmitted to us as the chimera of a tyrant?

Thus, the relation which I have the honour to present to you, Madam, is consistent with all the notions derived from history, with all the principles of the best political writers; and this conformity might, in the judgment of some, spare me the trouble of adducing the most positive proofs. But I have related anecdotes of a nature so private, that it may seem to afford matter of astonishment they should ever have been known; and having no right to expect, on the subject of facts so serious, that I should be believed on my word simply, I feel myself bound to produce both my authorities, and the



the means which I had of procuring information. During a residence of fifteen months at the court of Russia, in the suite of the Baron de Breteuil, minister plenipotentiary from France, the confidence with which that nobleman honoured me, leaves me no room to doubt that I was made acquainted with the same things which he knew; and, by a singularly advantageous situation, which he had the address to procure for himself, he enjoyed, after that revolution, the confidence of all parties: before that epoch, he was favoured with the intimacy of the Empress's two first confidantes. My personal situation in that country brought me into close contact with persons who had resided there for forty years back,

and

and who, from their condition, had access to sources of intelligence the most secret and the most infallible, among others, with M. d'Agenfeld, secretary from the court of Vienna. He was a sage and respectable old man of the strictest probity, who since the last years of Peter I. had laboured as secretary under eleven successive ambassadors. The practice of the ministry at Vienna being to grant no other recompence to their secretaries of embassy, except an increase of salary, with leave to grow old in their places, that court has, if I may use the expression, living archives in all the countries of Europe. The facts rapidly sketched unfolding the characters of Biren, of Munick, and of Lestock, passed during  
the

the embassy of M. de la Chetardie, all whose dispatches were committed to my care, and several of those anecdotes have been related to me by Field-Mareschal Munick. May I be permitted to say, the benevolence expressed to me by that truly great man, I consider at this hour as the most valuable fruit I reaped from my travels abroad. I had occasional intercourse with the Princess d'Aschekof, with the Piedmontese Odart, and one still more intimate with the Grand-Master of Artillery, Villebois. In a word, of all the persons named in this narrative, there is not a single one whom I did not personally know; and the very day of the revolution, I passed entirely either in the great square, or in society

possessed



possessed of the best information. The Empress herself related the singular moment of her being awaked in the morning, to the Count de Mercy, ambassador from Vienna to her court, and now to that of France; to him I am indebted for that anecdote. The arrival of the Empress at Petersburg, and her first arrangements, were detailed to me, a few days after the revolution, by her valet-de-chamber Michel, who followed her. Finally, the anecdote which is the most astonishing to find transpired, is the conversation which the Empress had in her closet with her minister. All that an indispensable duty permits me to say on this subject is, that there is but a single person, of high respectability, and

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whose

whose authority is unquestionable, between that minister and myself.

I have not palliated to myself the dangerous delicacy of writing the history of my contemporaries; but if such a consideration ought to suggest to me some caution respecting the use which I shall make of this history, in writing it, I have lost sight of them altogether.

I have said to myself, with Cicero;  
 “ It is by no means sufficient that all  
 “ which you say is true; you must  
 “ have courage to declare the whole  
 “ truth. And, according to a very fine  
 “ expression of Mably; A historian  
 “ ceases to be a private man; he sits in  
 “ judgment on nations and kings.”

But while I wait for the moment  
 of publishing this history, however re-  
 mote

mote it may be, the copy which I confide to your hands, Madam, is the only one which shall issue from mine.

Your virtues secure me from the slightest alarm, on the subject of this confidence: and, who can be better acquainted with the respect due to sovereigns in their life-time than you, Madam, to whom there still remains, of a sovereignty, long possessed by the house of Egmont, an ancient right to the same respect, and a greater attached to your name?

I am,

with the most profound respect,

MADAM,

your very humble,

and most obedient servant,

RULHIÈRE.

*Paris, February 10, 1768.*



more it may be the copy which I com-  
 mitted to your hands. Madam, is the only  
 one which shall taste from mine.

Your virtues secure me from the  
 slightest alarm, on the subject of this  
 confidence: and, who can be better  
 acquainted with the respect due to so-  
 veraigns in their life-time than you,  
 Madam, to whom their skill remains,  
 on a sovereignty long possessed by the  
 house of Brionne, an ancient right to  
 the same respect and a greater attach-  
 ed to your name?

I am,

with the most profound respect,

MADAM,

Your very humble,

and most obedient servant;

RUTHERFORD

Paris, February 10, 1768.

# ANECDOTES

OF THE

## REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA,

A. D. 1762.

I WAS upon the spot, and an eye-witness of the Revolution, which hurled the grandson of Peter the Great from the throne of all the Russias, and placed a female stranger upon it. I have seen that princess, the very day she fled from the palace as a fugitive, forcing her husband to resign into her hands at once his life and his empire. I had an intimate acquaintance with all the actors in that tremendous drama, in which, at a moment of imminent danger, every resource of courage and genius was eminently displayed; and, without any personal interest in the scenes

A

which

which I beheld, a traveller merely, to acquire knowledge of the governments established in different countries, I considered it as singularly fortunate for me to be a spectator of one of those uncommon events, which characterize a nation, and in which men completely display what is in them.

The detail on which I am entering will exhibit anecdotes of a cast not quite so serious; and I did not feel myself obliged to narrate the intrigues of young females, and the convulsions of a mighty empire, in the same tone of stateliness and solemnity. A writer of tragedy clothes great events in a dignified uniformity; his pictures represent the human character in a state of perfection beyond the life. This is by no means my design, and the whole of the great piece which I am going to delineate, shall be a faithful copy after nature.

It is necessary, first of all, to trace up to  
its



its source the irreconcilable enmity which mutually inflamed the Emperor and his consort; and the execution of this, will gradually unfold that series of ambitious views by which this princess was hurried on to an usurpation the most violent.

The princess Catharine d'Anhalt-Zerbst passed her earlier years in rather a middling condition. Her father, the sovereign of a petty state, and a general in the service of the King of Prussia, resided in a frontier town, in which, from infancy upward, she was accustomed to the military homages of a garrison; and if, now and then, on her ceasing to be a child, her mother carried her to court, to attract a transient smile from some one of the royal family, an ordinary eye could not have distinguished her amidst the croud which attend on such occasions.

But a prince, whose near relation she

was, having been, by a succession of extraordinary revolutions called into Russia, to mount one day the throne of that vast empire; and the great princesses of Europe declining to unite their lot with that of the heir of a crown so precarious, she was fixed upon as a proper match for him. Her own nearest relations made her renounce the religion in which they had brought her up, to make room for the ceremonial and creed of Russia; and it was expressly stipulated in the marriage contract, that should the prince die without children of this marriage, his consort, if she survived, should succeed to the imperial throne.

Nature seemed to have formed this Princess for the highest state of human elevation. Her appearance, even then, announced all that was to be expected of her; and perhaps, before we proceed farther, it may be agreeable



agreeable to the reader to contemplate a portrait of this illustrious woman.

Her figure is noble and agreeably impressive; her gait majestic; her person and deportment graceful in the highest degree. Her air is that of a sovereign. Every feature proclaims a superior character. Her neck is lofty, and the head finely detached. The union of these two parts, especially in profile, possesses wonderful beauty; and this beauty, in the movements of her head, she has the art of setting off to wonderful advantage. Her forehead is large and open; the nose borders on the aquiline; her mouth is sweetly fresh, and embellished by a singularly regular and beautiful set of teeth; the chin somewhat plump, and rather inclining to double, but without the smallest tendency to fatness. Her hair is chesnut-coloured, and uncommonly fine; the eyebrows are dark brown; the eyes



blue

eyes ~~hazel~~, and extremely fascinating. The reflexes of light give them a ~~bluish~~ tint; <sup>page</sup> and her complexion is dazzlingly clear. Loftiness is the true character of her physiognomy, taken as a whole. The softer characters of gentleness and goodness, which are there likewise depicted, appear, to a penetrating observer, only as the effect of an ardent desire to please; and those seductive expressions discover but too plainly an intention to seduce. A painter who was desirous of giving an allegorical representation of this great personage, proposed to exhibit her in the figure of a charming nymph, presenting with one hand, stretched forth, a wreath of flowers, and holding in the other, which is thrown behind her back, a flaming torch.

Married to the grand Duke at the age of fourteen, she had a presentiment from the beginning that she should become mistress

tress of his immense dominions. The ascendant which she easily acquired over her husband led directly to this; she was indebted for it entirely to her skill in the art of pleasing, and, for a long time, her ambition aimed at nothing higher. The nights, which they always passed in each other's company, did not appear sufficient to exhaust the vivacity of mutual endearment; and many hours were daily stolen from the formalities of a court, and devoted to an intercourse of a different nature. The whole Russian Empire was eagerly looking forward to the birth of a second heir, not imagining it possible that a youthful couple should be all the while employed only in practising the Prussian exercise, and doing the duty of a common sentinel under a shouldered musket. The grand dutchess, when she spoke of those secret amusements many days afterward, used to subjoin,



subjoin: "I thought myself good for some-  
 "thing else." But at that time, by ob-  
 serving a profound silence respecting her  
 husband's whimsical delights, and by com-  
 plaisantly humoring his taste in taking a  
 share of them, she got the complete go-  
 vernment of him. She employed every ef-  
 fort to conceal the puerilities of the prince,  
 and having no hope of reigning but through  
 him, it was her constant endeavour to make  
 it appear that he was not unworthy of fill-  
 ing a throne.

But exercises of the kind hinted at, pro-  
 duced no security to the Russian state of a  
 lineal succession to the imperial crown;  
 and the Empress Elizabeth wished to see  
 an heir as the means of preserving her own  
 safety. She kept in jealous confinement  
 the unfortunate boy, known to the world  
 by the name of the young Ivan, who, de-  
 throned at the age of fifteen months, was  
 incessantly



incessantly hurried from one corner of the Empire to another, from fortress to fortress, in order that his partisans, if any such there were, might be kept in profound ignorance of the spot in which he was secluded. Elizabeth is the more deserving of commendation, for having spared his life, that she knew perfectly well, from the facility with which a Revolution is effected in Russia, how the crown tottered upon her own head. She durst not lie down to sleep till day light appeared, because it was a nocturnal conspiracy which placed herself on the throne. She lived under such a terrible apprehension of being surprized during the hours of rest, that she had diligent search made all over her dominions for the most wakeful being who could be met with; and this person, when he was found, fortunately happened to be very deformed, and watched in the Empress's bed-chamber

giving a of never Bow in the morning all  
reference

all the time she lay asleep. Notwithstanding all those terrors, she made no attempt on the life of the only being who could inspire them. Nay the parents of Prince Ivan had not been kept asunder; and it was currently reported that, while they were under confinement, they had the consolation, or perhaps the affliction, of producing several children, formidable competitors, considering they were the senior branch of the house which gave Czars to Muscovy. The surest precaution against their pretensions was to shew the nation a long series of other heirs; but, how to effect this? There lay the difficulty. Eight years had already stolen away: and although nature had not totally denied sensibility to the grand Duke, the intelligent were able to demonstrate, by infallible tokens, that the line of succession was not to be expected from this quarter. Encouragement was given to a young courtier



courtier, one of the Counts Soltikof, who had the advantage of a fine figure, but whose mental powers could excite no great apprehension, to aspire after being the favourite of the grand Dutchess. The High Chancellor of Russia was employed to break the matter to herself. She took it as a high insult: she threatened him: she reminded him of the article in her marriage-contract, by which, in default of children, she was secured in the succession to the throne. But when he had given her to understand, that the commission which he then executed was given him by the very persons to whom she meant to complain; when he had made her sensible of the dangers to which she exposed the Empire, if this precaution was not taken, and the resolutions, more or less fatal, which the design of preventing those dangers might dictate against herself, she replied,



“ I comprehend you; introduce him to me  
 “ this evening.”

As soon as her pregnancy was declared, the Empress Elizabeth dismissed the young Russian upon foreign service. The grand Dutchess shed tears on the occasion, and endeavoured to find consolation in the choice of new objects. But the succession was now secured, and the choice of new favourites gave offence. Her conduct was watched with a severity which suited neither the general manners of the court, nor the personal conduct of Elizabeth. In truth, though it is only of late that the Russian ladies have been admitted into society; though at the close of the last century they lived in a state of confinement, and had no manner of weight even in the scale of domestic government, nevertheless the practice of absolute seclusion, and the employment of eunuchs not being established

established in the country, there resulted from this imprisonment of the women, amidst herds of slaves, a total dissoluteness of manners: and when Peter I. raised his subjects into a state of society, he had to reform only an apparent austerity in morals, in a real state of gross depravity. The late Empresses were not considered as having tarnished the glory of their reign, for having selected a succession of lovers from every description of subjects, slaves themselves not excepted. Under the present reign, a young favourite governed the empire, while a simple Cossaque, whose fortune commenced with playing on the serpent in the chapel of the palace, had, by a secret marriage, been admitted to share the Empress's bed. Such a marriage excited no surprise in a country whose sovereigns had for years past formed alliances indifferently with families of the lowest rank



rank of their subjects: but this Princess had a private reason for not declaring her's. Elizabeth had made it a point of conscience to leave her crown to her nephew, the lineal descendant of an elder sister; and from this idea of justice, from which she never swerved, amidst a thousand frailties, proceeded the strange singularity of living without any affectation of mystery with her lovers, and of having a husband in secret. Fortunes not quite so brilliant were likewise frequently seen falling into the lap of persons, who possessed no other merit but that of having given a moment's pleasure to their sovereign. But, whether it was concealed envy, or a scruple of conscience for having forced the grand Duchess to take the first step, every future choice which she seemed desirous to make was violently opposed; the very obscurity of the objects, for to this likewise she had

recourse,



recourse, could not screen them from the tremendous exile of that country. She was reduced to the brink of despair, when fortune sent into Russia Sir Charles Williams, as ambassador from the court of Great Britain; a man of a daring imagination, and whose conversation was plausibly seductive. This gentleman had the courage to argue with her thus: he said,

“ That meekness was the merit of victims;  
 “ that dark intrigues, that hidden resent-  
 “ ments were far below both her rank and  
 “ her genius: that, the greatest part of  
 “ mankind being feeble, decided charac-  
 “ ters always gain the ascendant over the  
 “ timid; that by shaking off constraint, by  
 “ resolutely avowing who they were on  
 “ whom she thought proper to bestow her  
 “ favours, by letting it appear that she  
 “ would consider as an insult to herself  
 “ whatever was attempted against them,  
 “ she

" she might live in what manner she pleased." This conversation issued in his presenting to her a young Polish gentleman of his retinue.

Count Poniatouski had formed a particular intimacy with that ambassador while he was in Poland; an intimacy indeed so very close, that the one being uncommonly handsome, and the other equally depraved, the tongue of scandal was set a-going. The minuteness of this detail is perhaps foreign to my subject; but Monsieur de Poniatouski having afterwards become a king, there is a degree of pleasure in tracing the steps which lead to the throne. Allied by his mother to the most powerful family in Poland, he had accompanied Sir Charles Williams to Petersburg, in the view of visiting a court so interesting to that of Warsaw; and being already known by the charms of his  
 wit,



wit, he was now endeavouring to acquire the knowledge of business, by acting in the capacity of secretary to the embassy. On this young stranger it was, after a secret interview, which the grand Dutchess enjoyed in disguise, that the whole sunshine of her favour was displayed. Poniatowski, after a short excursion to his own country, returned to Petersburg in the character of minister, which facilitated his intercourse with his mistress. This decorum, in respect of condition, superseded the necessity of employing any other appearance of decency; and this inviolable character bestowed, on the bold part which he was going to play, the sacred protection of the law of nations.

Utterly contemptible as the grand Duke was, he did not degrade himself so far as to submit longer to the government of his wife; but he lost every thing from his

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being no longer governed. Abandoned to his own management, and thus, as it were, exposed to the light, he appeared to every eye in his true colours. Never had fortune placed any one Prince in a more favourable situation. Sovereign of Holstein from his earliest years, he came, in process of time, to have besides the choice of two other crowns. It is well known that the Dukes of Holstein, long oppressed by Denmark, the throne of which was filled by the elder branch of their house, have by turns interested in their quarrels the powers which have arisen in the north; and, by a policy always steady and uniform, intermarrying, according to the circumstances of the times, with the Princesses of Sweden or of Russia, have at last actually got possession of both these thrones. They were both offered to Prince Peter, who, uniting in his own per-

son the blood of Charles XII and of Peter I, saw himself at the same time elected heir of the crown of Sweden, by the states of that kingdom, and invited into Russia by the Czarina, as her declared successor. On making choice of the empire for himself, he transferred the Swedish monarchy to his uncle; so that his family is indebted to him for the lustre which it enjoys, in possessing, at this day, without a rival, all the northern thrones: but, by a cruel stroke of destiny, after having appeared to employ unremitting exertions, for more than two centuries, in preparing for this Prince a station so exalted, nature produced a being utterly unworthy of it.

It is necessary, in order to form an idea of his strange character, to be informed that the care of his childhood had been committed to two men of very uncommon merit, but who fell into a great mistake in



attempting to form their pupil after the grandest models, attending rather to his fortune than to his capacity. On his being called into Russia, those two men, of manners too austere for the dissoluteness of that court, excited fear of the superior style of education which they continued to give him. He was taken out of their hands, and turned over to the instructions of abominable corrupters; but the first principles which he had imbibed having made a deep impression on his mind, the combined effect was an unaccountable mixture of good intentions degenerated into ridiculous manners, and of childish views directed toward great objects. Brought up in an utter abhorrence of slavery, in a love of equality, and a passion for heroism, he attached himself powerfully to cherish those noble ideas; but he pursued grand projects with a narrow spirit; and



and while he proposed the heroes from whom he sprung as his models, his genius restricted him to puerilities. He affected to take delight in the meanest functions of the soldiery, because Peter I. had thought proper to pass through all the stages of the militia; and, in pursuance of this idea, so absurd in a Sovereign, of marking the progress of his skill, by the steps of his advancement, he made it his boast, in the concerts given by his court, that he had formerly served the musicians, and had raised himself to the rank of first violin, by dint of talents. A sort of military mania gave a hue to his whole life: his favourite passion was to act the part of a drill serjeant; and, that he might have this pleasure continually within his reach, without provoking the Russian regiments to murmur, he had entirely the disposal of some miserable soldiers of Holstein,

stein, whose sovereign he was. His figure, naturally awkward to ridiculousness, became much more so by a dress, in which the Prussian manner was carried to the height of extravagance. His spatterdashes, which he wore continually, were so tight, that they cramped the motion of his knees, and obliged him to sit and to walk all in a piece. A hat, of prodigious size, fantastically cocked, covered a small, ugly, and crabbed countenance, the features of which, however, were not altogether destitute of vivacity; and he was at pains still farther, to disfigure it by perpetual grimaces, which he practised by way of amusement. His mind, at the same time, possessed a certain degree of liveliness, and it was easy to remark in him a decided turn to buffoonery. A princely deed of its kind made his character completely known. He had used a gentleman of his court extremely ill, without



without any just cause of offence; and as soon as he discovered that he had been in the wrong, proposed, by way of reparation, to fight a duel with him. Whatever might be the intention of the courtier, a man of profound cunning and address, away they went, and plunged into the solitude of a wood, where, drawing their swords at ten paces distance from each other, they thrust away lustily without coming nearer; the Prince suddenly stood still, and thus addressed his antagonist: "It would be a pity that two brave fellows like us, should cut each other's throats; come, let us embrace." They were proceeding back toward the castle, passing the time in mutual compliments; when, as a good deal of company appeared, the courtier exclaimed with precipitation: "Ah! my Lord, you are wounded in the hand, take care that no one see the blood,"

and



and insisted on wrapping up the hand in his handkerchief. The grand Duke, imagining that the man thought him really hurt, did not undeceive him, gave himself airs publickly on his fortitude in bearing the pain of a wound; and, to approve his generosity, made this gentleman a first-rate favourite.

It is easy to see with what facility flatterers could insinuate themselves into the good graces of such a Prince. It was not long before he found, among the maids of honour, a mistress truly worthy of him. But, what will occasion some surprise, his prime favourite, and aid-du-camp, Goudowitz by name, for whom his friendship never varied, was an honest young fellow, and one who really loved him.

The young court began, then, to be openly divided into two parties, when one night, at a country residence, Poniatouski,

as he was on the point of being admitted into the apartment of the grand Dutchess, without a pretence for being found in that place, fell into the hands of the injured husband. The lover, protected as a minister from a foreign court, maintained, in his present dangerous situation, the rights of his public character; and the Prince, who saw in this adventure, two courts in danger of quarrelling, durst take no step of himself, but had Poniatowski secured in a guard-house, and dispatched a courier to the favourite who governed the empire. The grand Dutchess, braving all danger, went in search of her husband, boldly acknowledged the whole truth, and represented to him how far the publishing of the affair might be attended with troublesome, or even fatal consequences to himself. She justified her own conduct, on the principle of retaliation, his keeping a mistress

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being a fact notorious to the whole empire. She promised that henceforward she would treat that young woman with all possible respect, which pride had hitherto forbidden her to do; and, as the grand Duke's military establishment swallowed up all his revenues, and thus deprived him of the means of rendering the situation of his mistress more agreeable, she addressed a promise to the girl herself, of an annual pension from her own pocket. The grand Duke, confounded at the ascendant over him which she still possessed, and at the same time importuned by his mistress, connived at the escape of Poniatowski, and did his utmost to prevent the rupture on which he had at first resolved.

The grand Dutchess, having derived from an event which might have proved her ruin, a still greater degree of security, and the opportunity of keeping as it were in her  
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pay even the mistress of her husband, she was emboldened to form new designs, and began to expose all the weakness of that Prince, with as much diligence as she had formerly used to conceal it. She had entirely changed her system; and henceforth centring all her ambition on her son, she formed the project of transferring her crown to that child, and of securing to herself the regency; a sagacious plan, and in strict conformity to the laws of that empire. But it was absolutely necessary that Elizabeth herself should depose her nephew; and how was a mild, irresolute, and superstitious Princess to resolve upon this, who, one day in signing a treaty of alliance with a foreign court, left her signature unfinished because a wasp alighted on her pen, and who respected in her nephew those rights which she herself had established? There remained one resource more at her death, the forging of a

will, an expedient which, among Sovereigns themselves, is not unexampled, and by which Adrian succeeded to Trajan.

But while preparations were making to bring this intrigue to bear, a revolution in the general affairs of Europe deprived the grand Dutchess of the confidant so necessary for the accomplishment of her designs; the High Chancellor Bestuchef, who, by the change of the court alliances, was thrown out of the ministry. His exile involved the departure of Count Poniatowski, whose recall was demanded of the King, his master, and the grand Dutchess, plunged into the deepest affliction, having ineffectually cast herself at the feet of the Empress, bathed in tears, to demand the restoration of her lover, nay regarded by Elizabeth with a restless jealousy, began to live in the midst of a court, as though she had been in a desert.



In this manner did her life pass for several years, having no connections that were known but with some young women, who had, like herself, been attached to Polish gentlemen, and who, on account of their personal charms, were not well received at the old court; she rose with the sun, spent whole days in perusing the best French authors, frequently alone, never long either at table or at her toilette; but, it was at this time she laid the foundation of her future greatness. She has been heard to confess that all the knowledge she had acquired of the arts of intrigue was from one of her ladies, whose appearance indicated the greatest degree of simplicity and indolence. It was during this period that she secured to herself friends for the hour of need; and that all persons of consequence persuaded themselves, from the secret alliances which she was forming with

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them, that they would become of still greater importance were she to govern; and that, in a word, the veil of a violent and unfortunate passion being drawn over certain adventures of a more consolatory nature, several of them had reason to think that, at her court, they might attain the place of favourite. Such was her situation when the Empress Elizabeth died the 5th of January, 1762.

Before she had recourse to the great designs which she was meditating, she once more attempted, at this instant, to recover her former influence by gentler methods. The ministers, the confessor, the lover, and the very domestics were all engaged to inspire the dying Empress with the thought of effecting a reconciliation between the grand Duke and his wife. This project succeeded; and the grand Duke, in the confusion of the moment, appeared to restore to her

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all his former confidence. She had persuaded him not to permit himself to be proclaimed by the regiments of guards: alleging, "That this custom savoured too much of the ancient barbarism; that it was more worthy of the modern state of Russia that the Sovereign should have himself recognized in the senate," assured, that under a government in which forms were observed, it would be an easy matter to make every thing subservient to her will. The ministers were gained, the senators prepossessed. She had composed the oration which he was to pronounce. But no sooner had Elizabeth expired, than the Emperor, overwhelmed with joy, presented himself with eagerness to his guards, and, by their proclamation, assuming despotically an absolute government, burst asunder all those fetters which they were preparing for him, escaped for ever from the



the authority of his wife, gave himself up daily to new resentments against her, almost disowned his son, by refusing to recognize him as his successor, and left Catharine no other resource but what she derived from her intrepidity and her friends.

Peter III. began his reign by an edict, whereby, in the plenitude of his arbitrary power, he granted to the Russian nobility the rights of a free nation; and as if, in reality, the rights of the people depended upon this concession, the edict produced such violent transports of joy, that this vain nation proposed to erect for him a statue of massy gold. But this liberty, of which, for the first time, they heard the name, and the claims of which such a Prince was little calculated to establish, was merely the illusion of a moment. The will of the Sovereign, without any form, continued to be the sole law; and the nation,

tion, struck with the confused idea of a blessing which it did not understand, was afflicted to find that it had been deceived.

The artist, who was to prepare the die for the new coinage, came to present the design to the Emperor. He had endeavoured, while the general cast of his features was preserved, to give them something of dignity. A branch of laurel lightly ornamented the long curls of his flowing hair. He rejected this design, exclaiming, "I should resemble the King of France." He insisted on being represented in his natural deformity, his hair dressed in the military style, in a manner so very unsuitable to the majesty of a throne, that these coins became an object of derision, and, in circulating over the whole empire, gave the first blow to the attachment of the people. At the same time he recalled from Sibe-



ria that crowd of unfortunate beings, with whom, for so many years past, they had been attempting to people those desert regions; and his court presented a spectacle which ages perhaps will never recal.

Here once more appeared Biren, formerly a domestic of the Dutchess of Courland, brought into Russia by that Princess, when she came to mount the throne, and raised, in quality of lover to the Sovereign, to exercise supreme authority; but though raised by means so gentle, he governed with a rod of iron; he caused to be put to death, in the course of nine years, no less than eleven thousand persons.

Under his tremendous government, this empire shone with it's greatest splendor; because every department of the administration, all places of power, all employments were at that time filled by the illustrious foreigners whom Peter I. had for-

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merly collected in his travels; their long services had placed them at the head of every department, and Biren, a foreigner like themselves, checked their ambition under a severe yoke, and made the whole Russian nation to bend under their authority. Become, by force, sovereign of Courland, the nobility of which had refused, some years before, to admit him into their order, he aimed likewise at the regency of the Russian empire, with an unlimited power. His expiring mistress, who had chosen for her successor an infant of a few weeks old, said to him with tears: "Biren you are ruining yourself:" nevertheless she had the weakness to appoint him. Every thing was provided for the arrival of this moment. He had, a short time before, put to death, by torture, all those of the exiles who could have been objects of terror to him, in order that, upon his ac-



cession to the regency, he might shew himself indulgent without danger. He had sacrificed one victim to public detestation, in a confidant whom he caused to be tortured to death with a gag in his mouth, laying to his charge every thing odious in the course of this reign. He was going to secure the empire to himself; but the first attempt made against him, proved his destruction. Three weeks of sovereign authority cost him twenty years of exile. He returned from it in the beginning of old age; but time had diminished neither his beauty nor strength, though his countenance was harsh and severe. During the nights of summer, he walked almost alone in the streets of that city where he once had reigned, and in which every person he met had to demand of him the blood of a brother, or of a friend. He still meditated to return into his own country

country as a Sovereign; and when Peter III. was dethroned, Biren said, " That the  
 " real fault of this Prince had been indul-  
 " gence, and that the Russians were to be  
 " governed only by the rod, and the axe."

There returned also on this occasion the man who had overthrown Biren, Field-Marshal Munick, a gentleman attendant on the Count d'Oldembourg, formerly a Lieutenant of infantry in the armies of Eugene and Marlborough, and honoured with the approbation of both of those Generals; who became an able engineer, as soon as chance had thrown into his hands, during the idleness of a winter-quarters, some torn, and detached leaves of an indifferent *Treatise on Geometry* in French; and who soon rendered himself superior even to those numerous men of genius among whom he had been allured by Peter the Great into his dominions; celebrated in  
 Russia



Russia for having constructed the canal which joins Petersburg to ancient Muscovy; but better known through the rest of Europe by his victories over the Poles, the Tartars, and the Turks.

After he had taken the city of Dantzick, from which King Stanislaus, whom he was besieging, had succeeded in effecting his escape, Biren, who was at the head of affairs, had him brought before the arbitrary tribunal called *Inquisition d'Etat*, as having favoured that escape. Munick, on being acquitted, kept up his resentment, and eight years afterward, the parents of Ivan having proposed to him to enter into an intrigue of court against the regent Biren, he, for answer, put himself at the head of their guard, went up to the palace, and clapped the regent in irons. He bestowed that title on the Emperor's mother; and, in the name of this Princess governed the empire

empire for a short time. But, being an object of hatred to that haughty woman, he retired with high reputation to enjoy the *otium cum dignitate*. His retreat did not prevent, on the accession of Elizabeth, his being arrested, and condemned, with all the old ministry. He ascended the scaffold, upon which he was going to be quartered, with the most perfect composure, and there received his pardon with the same apparent indifference. Carried into Siberia, sharply looked after, in a lonely house, in the midst of a morass, his threats, and frequently his name alone, caused all the governors of the neighbouring countries still to tremble, and the art, to which he had been indebted for his first elevation, became the amusement of his lengthened solitude. He returned from exile at the age of eighty two, the handsomest of old men, ignorant whether or

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not he had a son remaining; but thirty three of his descendants assembled for the purpose of receiving him on his arrival; and at this meeting the man, whom such various changes of fortune had not been able to move, was astonished at finding himself shedding tears. He . . . Since the moment in which Munick had caused Biren to be put in chains, disputing with him the possession of supreme authority, the first time these two men saw each other was in the gay and tumultuous crowd which surrounded Peter III; and that Emperor, having called them to him, tried to prevail on them to drink together. He ordered three glasses to be brought; but while he was taking his own, some one approached, and spoke in a whisper; he drank while he was listening, and in consequence of what was said to him retired hastily. These two ancient enemies remained

mained fronting one another, each with his glass in his hand, without speaking a word, their eyes fixed on the place from which the Emperor had disappeared, and presently flattering themselves that he had forgotten them, they darted a look at each other, measured each other with his eye, and putting away their glasses without tasting the wine, walked off different ways.

Near them appeared Count Lestock, who had destroyed the Princess regent, and crowned Elizabeth. This man, born in the Electorate of Hanover, having learnt surgery at Paris, where he acted so as to get a place in the Bastille, came into Russia to seek his fortune, and was soon, for his misconduct, sent into Siberia. On being recalled from this first exile, and having been appointed surgeon to the Princess Elizabeth, he persuaded her that she had a title to the throne, laboured during a whole

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year



year to form a party for her, by his sole exertions succeeded in interesting both Sweden and France in her behalf; and finding himself discovered, while Elizabeth, who in a danger so threatening, imagined she had no other resource than that of abandoning all her projects, he drew upon a card, that Princess with her head shaved, and himself upon a wheel; and on the back of the card, the Princess on a throne; and himself on the steps, decorated with the ribbon of a superior order of knighthood; and, shewing her these two reverses, he said to her, "This night the one, or to-morrow the other." He conducted her that very night to the palace, escorted by a hundred old soldiers who had served under Peter the Great, whose daughter she was. Upon their arrival at the first guard-house, a drum began to beat the alarm, but either Lestock or the

the Princess run a knife through the drum-head; and they ever after disputed the honour of having had that presence of mind. The sentinel who guarded the chamber of the infant Emperor, stopped Elizabeth, and presented his bayonet to her breast. Lestock exclaimed: "Wretch, what are you about? Fall down and intreat mercy from thy Empress." The sentinel immediately prostrated himself. After having thus placed upon the throne the mistress whom he served, governed continually by his genius for intrigue, stimulated by an incessant itch of negociating with foreign powers, he was easily ruined by the ministers. When on his return, the conspiracy of the Empress Catharine had broke out, nothing could equal the vexation of this man at finding there had been a plot in his time, in which he had no hand; and



he observed, with a malignant joy, the imprudences of those young conspirators.

Thus each day witnessed the arrival of persons rendered interesting at least by their long calamities; and the court of Peter III. was filled with a multitude, who were indebted to him for more than life. But it filled, at the same time, with ancient animosities, and irreconcilable interests. All these exiles, stripped of every thing at the time of their disgrace, demanded the restitution of their fortunes. They were conducted into vast magazines, where, in compliance with the custom of the country, all confiscated property is preserved; melancholy deposits of the loss of favour, in which were arranged, according to the order of time, all the remains of those renowned shipwrecks. They there sought, in the midst of dust, for their valuable effects,

fects, their diamond insignia, the gifts with which Kings themselves had formerly purchased their influence; and too often, after fruitless researches, they recognized them in the possession of the favourites of the late reign.

Peter III. was hastening to his ruin by actions good in themselves, and most of the things which contributed to his downfall became faults merely by his precipitation, and have since been executed by his wife with success and reputation. It was a matter of much utility to his empire, that the clergy should be dispossessed of their immense riches; and after his fall, Catharine, by gaining over some of the principal ecclesiastics, by giving them, in private pensions, more than they lost by the general seizure, easily executed that hazardous operation. But Peter III, who enjoined it by a simple act of despotism, without using  
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any precautions, shocked the feelings of those superstitious tribes; and the priests, most of whose wealth consisted in peasant slaves, excited them to revolt, and promised to the seditious prayers and absolution.

That Princess founded the credit which she enjoys in Europe, and the authority which she exercises in the states adjoining to her empire, on her intercourse with the King of Prussia; and that intercourse, the work of her husband, excited against him a just indignation. In fact, while Russia, leagued with the greatest powers of Europe, was carrying on against the King of Prussia an obstinate and sanguinary war, Peter, filled with an extravagant passion for heroism, had secretly assumed the title of Colonel in his service, and betrayed all the counsels of the allies to him.

He had no sooner become Emperor, than he spoke of him, in a tone of exultation,

tion, under the appellation of " the King, " my master;" and this hero, who was then reduced to the last extremity, without it's appearing possible that the astonishing resources of his genius could prevent his destruction, saw all at once, by this prosperous turn of affairs, his fortunes re-established, the Russians, his conquerors, crowding into his service, and he gave in exchange to the Czar the title of General. But the Russians, though they obeyed, felt with indignation that they must still shed their blood in order to make reparation for their conquests; and accustomed as they had been for so many years to detest the name of Prussian, they could no longer consider their master in any other light than as the ally of their enemy.

Peter, continuing incessantly to inflame the same discontents, sent to the senate those



those new laws, the collection containing which is denominated the Frederician Code, and which the King of Prussia had framed for his own dominions. Orders were issued that they should be observed through the whole extent of the Russian empire. But either from the ignorance of the translators, or the want of terms in the Russian language to convey an exact idea of all the expressions employed in law tracts, there was not found a single senator who could understand that work; and the Russians saw, in this vain attempt, nothing but a marked contempt for all their own customs, and a ridiculous attachment to foreign manners. Not that such an attachment was unnecessary among a people entirely destitute of laws, with whom it is an admitted practice in criminal processes, to beat the accused person till he confess  
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his crime; and if he persist in denying it, to beat the accuser till he retract his testimony.

It was undoubtedly the duty of a Sovereign to rescue his people from such a state of barbarism; and as the designs so foolishly undertaken by this Prince have since been so wisely executed by his wife, it is natural to conclude, that they had been concerted between them, during the time of their intimacy. But, let us leave to politicians the task, of comparing two administrations so very opposite, though founded upon the same principles, to remark how that Princess, in completely abolishing the Russian customs, takes perpetual care to keep out of sight the circumstance of her being a foreigner; and, in a word, to examine whether those very plans which occasioned the ruin of the Emperor, did

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not facilitate to his successor the execution of the projects in which he failed.

Discontent soon diffused itself over the regiments of guards, the real masters of the throne. These regiments, habituated for many years to the peaceful service of the palace, under the command of the women who had successively reigned, received orders to follow the Emperor to distant campaigns, and filled with regret at relinquishing their residence in the capital, they prepared for their departure with much reluctance; a movement little short of sedition, and always favourable to the person who wishes to excite revolt among the troops. The Emperor intended to lead them to Holstein, resolving to employ his newly acquired power in avenging the injuries which his ancestors had received from Denmark, and in restoring to his ancient country

country it's extent, and it's independence: what flattered him most in the prospect of this expedition, was the felicity of having upon the road an interview with the King of Prussia; arrangements were made for this meeting; all the states of Europe began to be alarmed at the thought of this hero's availing himself of his whole ascendant over his fanatical admirer, so as speedily to have under his command a new army of a hundred thousand Russians; and the whole European Continent, with eyes fixed on this event, saw itself threatened with a Revolution.

The city meanwhile appeared to be entirely occupied in feasting. The solemnities of peace were celebrated amidst the preparations for war. A licentious joy reigned in the palace. The time approached when they must go, and join the army; the court, on the point of separating, was



fearful of interrupting their pleasures for a single day.

The Russian nation is indolent, gay, dissolute; and though the mildness of the late reign had given some polish to the mind, and some decency to manners, the time was not long passed since that barbarian court had celebrated, by a festival, the nuptials of a buffoon with a goat. The new court easily assumed, therefore, the air and tone of a company of soldiers making merry.

The six months of which this reign consisted, were an uninterrupted scene of revelry. Beautiful women over-heated themselves with English beer, and the fumes of tobacco, without being suffered by the Emperor to return home, for a single instant of the day; overcome with fatigue, and watching, they fell asleep on sophas, in the midst of these noisy orgies. The actresses,

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and female dancers, all of them foreigners, were frequently admitted to these public festivals; and when the ladies of the court complained of this to the Emperor, through the medium of his mistress, he answered, "That among women there was no distinction of rank." Amidst the very licentiousness of these revels, in his moments of most intimate familiarity with the Russians, he could not refrain from expressing his contempt for them by perpetual sneers, and mockery. This court presented an extravagant mixture of justice and immorality, of grandeur and silliness. Two of his greatest favourites, having sold the protection which his favour had bestowed on them, he beat them violently with his own hands, took for his own use the money which they had received, and continued to treat them with the same distinction as formerly. A stranger having come to give him



him information respecting certain seditious expressions which he had heard, Peter answered, that he detested informers, and ordered the man to be punished. To the amusements of the court succeeded the violent exercises with which he teized, and wearied out his soldiers. His military mania had no longer bounds; he was desirous that a perpetual discharge of artillery should give him an anticipated representation of war; his peaceful capital presented the noisy image of a besieged city. He gave orders, one day, that they would let him hear the report of a hundred large pieces of cannon fired off at the same instant; and it was necessary, in order to repress that whim, to assure him it would shatter the city to pieces. He would frequently rise from table, and throw himself on his knees, with a glass in his hand, before the portrait of the King of Prussia. He would

would exclaim: "My dear brother, we two will conquer the universe." He had conceived a singular affection for the envoy of that Prince. He wished the envoy, before his departure for the campaign, should have all the young women of the court. He frequently would shut him up with them, and place himself, with a drawn sword in his hand, as sentinel at the door; when thus employed, the High Chancellor of the Empire happened to come to him on business; he said to him, "Go, and settle it with Prince George; you see I am on duty." Prince George, of the house of Holstein, was one of his uncles, who had been a lieutenant-general in Prussia, and to whom he had sometimes said publicly: "Uncle you are but an indifferent General, the King has given you your discharge." Whatever might be in this expression of contempt, he confided



fided every thing to this Prince, from an instinctive feeling of affection for his family. He intended at the very moment when he was dethroned, to give him a sovereignty, having already constrained Biren to relinquish in his favour what were called his rights to the Dutchy of Courland; and from the day of his accession to the throne, listening injudiciously to an honourable feeling, he had, to the great regret of the Russians, invited to his court all the Princes and Princesses of that numerous house.

Every eye was turned toward the Empress; but that Princess, apparently unconnected, and perfectly tranquil, afforded no ground for suspicion. During the funeral obsequies of the deceased Empress, she had endeared herself to the people by a rigid devotion, and a scrupulous fidelity in observing all the formalities of the Greek religion, sometimes to no small indignation,

ligion, more distinguished by a pompous ceremonial than by its morality. She made it her study to ingratiate herself with the soldiers, by the only means which the loneliness of her situation permitted her to employ. She put condescending questions to the sentinels, and presented them her hand to kiss. One evening, as she was crossing a dark gallery, and one of the sentinels having rested his arms in honour of her as she passed, she enquired how he came to know her. The man replied, in the Russia style, which borders a little on the oriental, "Mother, who could possibly mistake you? Every spot where you are is illuminated by your presence." She sent the soldier a piece of gold, and her emissary easily made him a partisan. Ill used by the Emperor, every time that she was obliged to appear at court, she seemed to be under appre-

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sion of treatment the most violent. Sometimes, in public, involuntary tears stole down her cheeks, apparently in spite of all her efforts to restrain them. She endeavoured thus to excite the compassion of the people as an engine in her favour. Her secret emissaries propagated reports of the dangers to which she was exposed; and indeed she appeared to be reduced to such a state of dejection, and fallen into such discredit, that she had lost all authority, even in the interior of the palace, and her domestics seemed to serve her no longer, but from a principle of attachment.

If it were proper to form a judgment of her designs from the hazards which she run, and to justify perhaps what she dared to attempt by what she had to fear, it will be asked, What were the precise intentions formed by her husband to her prejudice? But how is it possible to unfold these with  
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any degree of certainty? Such a man could have no fixed resolution, but his emotions were dangerous. Certain it is, he had entertained serious thoughts of releasing the unfortunate Ivan from captivity, and of acknowledging him as heir of the throne; that in prosecution of this intention, he had him conveyed to a fortress in the vicinity of Petersburg, and had paid him a visit in that prison. He had recalled from abroad the Count Soltikof, the first favourite who had been introduced to the Empress, under the pretended necessity of securing the succession, and pressed him publicly to declare himself the father of the Grand Duke, expressing a determined resolution of disowning that child. His mistress began to discover an immoderate ambition. Reports were circulated through the palace, that such ladies of the



court as had just ground of complaint against their husbands, were to be allowed the privilege of a divorce; and the Emperor had just given private orders for fitting up twelve beds, perfectly equal, against for as many approaching nuptials, not one of which could as yet be precisely foreseen. But by this time all conversation consisted of the complaints, murmurs, half sentences, of persons trying to discover the sentiments of each other. The Empress was observed in her solitary walks, with an air of seriousness, but not of chagrin. A penetrating eye would have seen evidently depicted on her countenance designs of the boldest nature, disguised under that settled phlegm. Among the populace, seditious rumours began to be dispersed, which were artfully fomented, in order to dispose their minds to open rebellion. It resembled the hollow mur-

mur

mur which precedes a storm; and the public in general anxiously looked for the moment when some great event should change the whole face of affairs; it being rumoured on all hands that the destruction of the Empress was inevitable, and at the same time universally apprehended that a revolution was about to take place. While every one was taking a warm interest in favour of the Empress, what excited the most serious apprehensions about her safety, was the want of a rallying point in her favour. The general eye was directed to no one precise leader. The weakness of all the grandees, and want of vigour in every known character, prevented any one in particular from being looked to with confidence. The whole of this vast enterprize was, in truth, put in motion by a personage till then unknown, and



and who had never engaged the public attention before.

Orlof, the handsomest man of the north, of rather mean birth, a gentleman, if you please, as far as the possession of a few peasant slaves can confer that title, his brothers serving as privates in the regiments of guards, had been appointed Aid de Camp to the Grand Master of Artillery, the most vain-glorious man in all Russia. It is customary in this country for generals to have their aid de camps constantly about their person; they guard their anti-chambers, follow the carriages of the general on horseback, and form the interior society of his household. The advantage of a fine form, which had chiefly contributed to the elevation of Orlof, soon proved the cause of his disgrace. The Princess Kourakine, one of the most attractive beauties of the court,

court, a fair brunette, fresh, and animated, was in public the mistress of the General, but in secret she bestowed her favours on the Aid de Camp. The General was too vain to be jealous; but the force of evidence is irresistible; unfortunately he chanced to surprise them together. The Aid de Camp was degraded from his situation, and the sentence of eternal exile into the deserts of Siberia was about to be pronounced, when an invisible hand snatched him from impending ruin. To the Grand Dutchess he owed his preservation. The news of this adventure had reached the retreat in which she lived prior to the death of the Empress Elizabeth. Every particular related of so handsome a victim made her consider him as worthy of the whole strength of her protection; and besides, the taste of the Princess Kourakine is so well known, that the lover of her  
 choice



choice may always be safely taken blindfold. Catherine Ivanouwena, a shrewd, and favourite waiting-maid, had the management of this intrigue, and employed every precaution which distrust itself could suggest ; and Orlof, beloved by a beautiful unknown, although still far from suspecting the full extent of his good fortune, already considered himself as the happiest of mankind. It might be asked whether he was more so, when at length, amid the pomp of a public ceremony, he saw seated on the throne the beauty he adored. His manner of life, however, did not on this account continue less obscure. Whether from inclination, or habit, or a fixed design, his time was chiefly spent among the soldiers ; and although, at the death of the General who had persecuted him, she went so far as to get him appointed Paymaster of Artillery, a post which gave him  
the

the rank of Captain, still his mode of living was the same as before, and his money served only to gain him more friends among the soldiery. Nevertheless he was assiduous in his attendance upon his mistress; he was constantly under her eye, and yet never was intrigue conducted with more art and reserve. In the midst of a jealous court, not the slightest suspicion ever alighted upon her. When Orlof, however, mounted at once to the height of royal favour, the courtiers acknowledged it to be an oversight, that they had not perceived the connection sooner; they recollected signs of a secret understanding between them; and mentioned particular occasions which ought to have turned their suspicions into certainty. But the whole result of those remarks, when the affair was over, amounts to this, that the two lovers had for a long time enjoyed the satisfaction



of a secret mutual intelligence, without having their correspondence betrayed. Thus lived the grand Dutchess, at the very moment that the loftiness of her spirit, and her almost romantic constancy were furnishing topics of conversation to all Europe.

The Princess d'Aschekof is the youngest of three celebrated sisters. One of them is the famous Countess Boutourline, whose travels have universally diffused the knowledge of her beauty, her wit, and her gallantries. The other, Elizabeth Woronsoff, is the mistress whom the grand Duke had selected from among the frail ones of the court, otherwise denominated maids of honour. All the three were nieces of the new grand Chancellor, who, having attained that high situation by his assiduity, his services, and the pliability of his disposition, for the space of thirty years together, was now enjoying it in luxury, and excess,

and

and had nothing to give his nieces but his credit. The two first of them had been placed at court, and the youngest was brought up under his own inspection. Here she had an opportunity of seeing all the foreign ministers; but from the age of fifteen she chose to converse only with the ministers of republican governments. She exclaimed vehemently against the Russian despotism, and declared her intention of going to settle in Holland, the civil liberty, and religious tolerance of which country were her favourite topics. Her passion for celebrity appeared still more ardent. It is singularly remarkable, that in a country where rouge and white are so universally used by the women, that not a female beggar appears in the streets without rouge; that in the Russian language, the word which denotes *red*, is the term most expressive of beauty; and that among the of-



ferings which must be presented by every  
 village to the lady of the manor, it is al-  
 ways the etiquette to present, among the  
 rest, a pôt of white paint; in a country of  
 this description, the young Woronsoff, at  
 the age of fifteen, declared, that she would  
 never wear it in her life. One day, Prince  
 d'Aschekof, one of the handsomest noble-  
 men about the court, having addressed her  
 in a style of gallantry somewhat particular,  
 according to the language of the country,  
 she called the grand Chancellor, and said  
 to him: "Uncle, Prince d'Aschekof is now  
 "doing me the honour to propose mar-  
 "riage to me." Strictly speaking, what  
 she said was true; and the young man, not  
 daring to acknowledge to the first person-  
 age in the empire, that the proposition  
 which he had made to his niece did not  
 amount precisely to this, he married her;  
 but

but sent her to Moscow, two hundred leagues off.

There she passed two years, in a society which she had the address to form, of the most sensible persons in that capital. Her sister, mean-while, the grand Duke's mistress, was living like a soldier's wife, totally useless to her relations, who had flattered themselves that, through her means, they should be able to manage the grand Duke, and who saw her, from her caprice and want of perseverance, flying off from all their schemes. They called to mind the spirit of the Princess, to which those courtiers gave the appellation of address and intrigue. They employed every art to procure her recal to that court, persuaded that, by her talent for intrigue, they should be able to acquire an universal ascendant. The court was then at a residence in the country. This young woman could not behold



behold without disgust her sister's abominable  
 low debauchery, and she shut herself up for  
 days together in the solitude of the grand  
 Dutchess. Both of them, in those long con-  
 versations, talked of despotism in the same  
 terms of abhorrence. She thought she had  
 found, the sentiments which she passionately  
 wished to find, in a sovereign of her  
 country. But as she acted exactly the op-  
 posite part of what was demanded of her,  
 they obliged her to retire from court;  
 which she did, filled with indignation  
 against her kindred, and with an enthusi-  
 astic attachment to the grand Dutchess.  
 She remained at Petersburg, living in a  
 very plain style, keeping company with  
 strangers more than with Russians, em-  
 ploying her ardent genius in the study of  
 the most sublime sciences; and having ob-  
 served, at the first glance, what a misera-  
 ble progress her compatriots had made in  
 these,

these, declaring in her familiar conversations, that the fear of a scaffold should never intimidate her; when she saw her sister on the point of becoming Empress, she regarded with horror an elevation to which her family could aspire only by effecting the destruction of her friend: and if no violence mingled in her complaints, it was because she began, from this moment, to form fixed designs.

Such were, in the midst of general neglect, the two unknown connections which the Empress had kept up; and as they were even unknown to each other, she brought forward the two conspiracies at once, and kept them absolutely separate, meditating by means of the one, a revolt of the guards, and, by the other, a convocation of the grandees.

Orlof, in order to bring the plots to a bearing, had only to continue his present mode



mode of life. His first accomplices were his brothers, and an intimate friend whose name was Bibikof. These five men, assured of making their fortune, or of perishing in the attempt, sold all their little patrimony, and resorted incessantly to the various houses of entertainment which the soldiery frequented. The sagacity which the Empress had employed, in placing the chest of artillery in Orlof's hands, furnished them with more considerable funds, with which they laid themselves out to humor all the passions of the soldiers. In the general disposition of the public mind, it was easy to give them a common movement. They sowed the seeds of discontent and sedition in every regiment; they inspired them with pity for the Empress, and with a desire of living under her authority: in order to make sure of the first blow, they gained over two complete companies.

panies of the regiment of guards *Ismailof*, and received from the soldiers an oath upon the crucifix; nay they wished, at all events, to make sure of their colonel, being fully convinced, from his character, that he would neither think of betraying the conspiracy, nor of placing himself at the head of it. This was Count Rozamouski, a simple Cossaque, who, from the meanest occupations, by which he had earned his livelihood, had risen, by his brother's marriage with the late Empress, to such a high degree of favour, that the formidable post of *Hetman*, or supreme commander of the Cossagues, was expressly established for him. This man, of a colossal beauty, disdaining every thing that wore the face of intrigue, and even every thing that looked like business, was well received at court on account of his stately appearance, treated as a favourite by the Emperor, and beloved by the commonalty, because in the



midst of honours, and the pomp of high life, the simplicity of his behaviour made it apparent that he did not forget the meanness of his origin: of no manner of use in the formation of a plot, his presence in a revolt might go far towards determining the multitude. Orlof, whom he had never seen, ventured to invite him to a secret interview, laid before him all the disorders of government, and easily obtained a promise from him, that the moment the Empress should lay her commands on him, he would attend her person. Rozamouski came under no other engagement, and no other was exacted of him. Orlof communicated to his mistress an account of this transaction in the interviews which he had with her, and which were still a profound secret. They escaped the scandal of the barracks as well as that of the court; and though this Princess was at that time enduring all the uneasiness

casiness of a pregnancy which she had never declared, the same veil of mystery concealed both their love and their conspiracy.

On the other hand, the Empress had kept up with the Princess d'Aschekof an uninterrupted commerce of letters, which, having for a long time been no more than the amusement of two young minds, had gradually become a correspondence of conspiracy. That young female set her project a-going by procuring for her husband an employment which required his absence, that she might not be under the necessity of making him her confident, or, perhaps, to put him out of the way of the dangers to which she was going to expose herself. She feigned a slight indisposition, that she might go, under pretence of drinking the waters, to live in a garden adjoining to the city; and thus, dividing the nu-



merous visits she had to receive, she prevented the suspicion which might have been excited by an extraordinary flux of company to her house.

On the first word, the heads of the discontented clergy, and especially the archbishop of *Novogorod*, promised every thing that could be wished of them. She found, among the grandees, all the traces of an intelligence of ancient standing between them and the Empress, and had nothing to do, in many conferences, but to unite the broken thread.

The only man, whose situation rendered him equally necessary to the two conspiracies, was the Count Rozamouski; but the Empress, secretly secure of him, took care to tell the Princess: "that it was unnecessary to gain him over; that for several years past, he had promised to espouse her cause, whenever she expressed  
"a wish

“ a wish; that she knew him sufficiently  
 “ to put confidence in that promise, and  
 “ that nothing more was necessary than to  
 “ inform him at the instant she should  
 “ have need of him.” These words, which  
 seemed to announce both the most sage  
 reserve, and the most generous confidence,  
 and which must have been readily believed  
 by that young woman, diverted her, without  
 any effort, from the only method by which  
 she could have discovered the double in-  
 trigue; but an interest incompatible with  
 the designs of the Empress, and of the  
 Princess, opposed to them an obstacle  
 which appeared insuperable.

Catharine, turning to her advantage the  
 injury which the Emperor had done to her  
 son, in not naming him to succeed to the  
 throne, wished to secure it to herself. The  
 governor of the young grand Duke, the  
 Count Panin, whom regard to his fortune  
 intimately



intimately connected with that of his pupil, easily led into the conspiracy, was desirous of depriving Peter III. of the crown, to have it transferred, in right of succession, to the natural heir, and to give to the Empress only a regency. He opposed, for a long time, and with firmness, every other resolution: the Princess d'Aschekof, with whom he was violently in love, employed in vain all her arts of seduction; she encouraged his passion, but she yielded not to it, persuaded among other reasons, by the intimate connection that had subsisted between her mother and Panin, that she was the daughter of this lover. A Piedmontese, named Odart, their confidant, determined this young woman to get the better of her scruples; and it was thus she obtained from Panin the sacrifice of his pupil. It will be sufficient, in order to make known the character of this Piedmontese,

simply

simply to relate his own words to a man who was in his confidence: " I was born poor; I see that there is nothing regarded in the world but money; I will have it; I would go, for this purpose, this evening, and set fire to the palace; when I have obtained it, I will retire into my own country, and live as honestly as any other man."

Panin and the Princess were both of the same way of thinking, with respect to the government of their country; and if the Princess was indebted to her natural disposition for a violent horror at slavery, Count Panin, who had been minister from his own court to that of Sweden for fourteen years, had there imbibed some republican ideas. Both of them, therefore, united in the resolution of rescuing their country from despotism, and the Empress seemed to encourage them to it. They digested



digested the conditions upon which the grandees of the empire, on deposing Peter III, should bestow, in a formal election, the crown upon his wife, with a limited authority. This hope engaged in the conspiracy a great number of the nobles. The execution of this project wore every day more and more the appearance of probability; and Catharine, who had solely employed it as a mean of seduction, found that she was going to be engaged to a greater extent than she at first intended.

At the same time the two intrigues began to mingle. The Princess, secure of the grandees, descended to the soldiers. Orlof, secure of the soldiery, was making attempts among the great. Both, without knowing one another, met in the barracks, and beheld each other with an anxious curiosity. The Empress, who was by both made acquainted with this rencounter, thought

thought it expedient to unite the two intrigues; and she even had the address, in strengthening the one by the other, to make herself mistress of the whole movement. Orlof, in obedience to her instructions, made himself sought after by the Princess, and this young woman, believing that the sentiments with which she herself was inspired, were those of every heart, saw, in the leader of a faction, only the zealous citizen. Never did she entertain the least suspicion, that he had direct access to the Empress; and from this moment Orlof, having indeed become the sole and effective chief of the enterprise, had the singular dexterity to appear only as the agent of the Princess d'Aschekof.

But as soon as he was initiated into the counsels of the grandees, he opposed all their projects. He swore that he would by no means suffer them to impose any

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conditions



conditions upon their Sovereign. He said to them: " That the Empress giving her  
 " word that she would herself regulate the  
 " rights of their liberty, they were bound  
 " to believe her; that for what remained,  
 " they might act at their discretion, but he  
 " was master of the soldiery; that himself,  
 " and the guards, would act alone, if ne-  
 " cessary, and were sufficient to raise her  
 " to the sovereignty."

The grandees, already accomplices in the plot, found themselves then obliged to yield to the strong hand of power, and to content themselves with the vague promises which the Empress made them of confirming their liberty.

In the mean time, the people were not neglected; and in order to inspire them with the spirit of revolt, a report was spread abroad, that it had already broke out in all the provinces, that the slaves of the priests  
 were

were crouding together from all parts, refusing to obey the new edict; that the Crim-Tartars were encamped upon the frontiers, and were preparing to force the lines, as soon as the Emperor should have led all the troops out of the empire, to carry on a war absolutely foreign to Russia. Not only these reports, mingled with truth and falshood, flew with rapidity, as it happens in every country where the government becomes odious, and where the general discontent nourishes with avidity every thing which can flatter and sharpen it; but in Russia, where public affairs were never conversed upon, where this curiosity might have been punished with death, such reports were of themselves a commencement of revolt.

This ridiculous precipitation in the Emperor to forward his departure, occasioning him to neglect going to Moscow, accord-



ing to established custom, to receive the crown in the chapel of the ancient Czars, it was almost openly published to be lawful to dethrone a Sovereign who disdained to submit to the ceremony of consecration.

At the same time the Empress imparted to the ministers of those courts, whose alliance this Prince had abandoned, that she held this perfidy in detestation, and took measures for obtaining, from those courts, the money which was now becoming necessary to her. These ministers, and especially the French ambassador, the Baron de Breteuil, accustomed for several years past to direct the public mind of that nation, were occupied in the present crisis of general affairs, in defeating the projects in which the Czar suffered himself to be involved by the enemies of their respective Sovereigns. They embraced with eagerness the opportunity which the conspiracy presented

presented to this effect; and although restricted by the orders of their courts which had prescribed them to take little part in those movements, they laboured with as much activity as success in throwing the weight of their influence into the scale of the Empress. On the contrary, the ministers, friendly to the Emperor, being solely occupied in accelerating his departure, devoted themselves, for his pleasure, to the infatuated toils of his court, and while so many intrigues escaped their observation, they congratulated themselves on the success of their negociations, in seeing the troops file off in every direction, the fleet ready to sail, the Emperor surrounded with the whole force of his empire, and the day of his departure already fixed.

Here was then a numerous party, and certain resources; and at the very time in which the danger became most imminent,

it



it did not even appear that there was yet formed a settled conspiracy. Those who are well acquainted with the Russian nation, and even the ancient conspirators themselves, allege that it is always thus that such enterprises must be conducted in that country; this people being predisposed to conspiracy by the form of their government, by their natural turn to secrecy, and even by their patience under suffering; nevertheless, on account of the implacable hatred which reigns among all families, and of the excessive distrust which is diffused over every breast, it would be too imprudent to collect there a numerous body of conspirators, to parcel out among themselves the different parts of one great design. Moreover, the habit of seeing people of the lowest rank, exalted to the highest dignities, giving to each one the same right of pretension, it would be equally

equally dangerous to shew them chiefs, whose approaching greatness they might have reason to suspect; but that it is necessary to make sure of each individual apart; to give every one hopes of the greatest favour, and not unite them till the instant of execution.

If an assassination was thought the proper mode—it might be depended upon; and the captain of the guards, Passig, had thrown himself at the feet of the Empress, asking only her consent to stab the Emperor at noon day, at the head of his guard. This man, and one named Baschekakof, a fellow of the same stamp, had already missed him twice near a small uninhabited house (the first which Peter the Great built in the isles on which he founded Petersburgh, and which, on that account, the Russians preserve with veneration) a favourite retirement of Peter III.

who



who came thither sometimes of an evening with his mistress, and where these two rascals had way-laid him, without waiting for a prompter. A chosen band of conspirators, conducted by the Count Panin, had been to reconnoitre the apartment of this Prince, his bed-chamber, his bed, and all the doors which led to them. The project on which they finally determined, was to come thither in force on one of the ensuing nights, to carry him off, if possible; to stab him, if he made any resistance, to assemble the grandees in order to give to his deposition the appearance of legal authority; and the Empress, who was not to appear to have taken any part in this revolution—avoiding the least semblance of being concerned in this conspiracy—was to have affected a compliance solely with the prayer of the people, and to receive through the medium of a voluntary and unanimous proclamation,

proclamation, the rights which no title conveyed to her. Such was the basis of her conduct. It was to produce this effect, that, almost invisible in the conspiracy, she directed all the springs of it, and even after the public steps she was forced to take, she always endeavoured to bring the minds of the people back to that course.

The Emperor was at a country seat, twelve leagues off. The Empress, for fear of creating suspicions, if she remained in town during this absence, was herself at another country residence. It was on his return thence that the Emperor had fixed his departure for the war, and the Empress the execution of her purposes; but the frantic zeal of this very Captain Passig confounded every design. This violent conspirator, always hurried away by the ardor of conversation, spoke of the plot before a soldier whom he had used harshly,



and who immediately lodged an information against him before the chancery of the regiment. On the 8th of July, at nine o'clock in the evening, Passig was arrested, and a courier was dispatched to convey this intelligence to the Emperor.

All was lost, had it not been for a precaution the Piedmontese Odart had taken, to which he alone and the Princess d'Aschekof were privy. Every principal man had in his retinue a spy, who never lost sight of him. The Princess was informed at a quarter past nine that Passig was arrested. She sent word to Count Panin to come to her instantly; and proposed to him, without losing a moment, to commence the execution of their designs; a proposition similar to that which the staunch Romans in ancient times acceded to, under like circumstances; "That it was necessary to endeavour suddenly to cause

" an

“ an insurrection among the people and  
 “ the military ; that the accomplices should  
 “ assemble ; that the explosion of unex-  
 “ pected events lays hold on the mind,  
 “ and hurries away the multitude ; that  
 “ the Emperor had nothing in readiness  
 “ to oppose to such an effort ; that the  
 “ most valiant are astonished by sudden  
 “ movements ; and what could that  
 “ mountebank do against them, with a  
 “ train of debauchees ? That things im-  
 “ possible in deliberation, are executed,  
 “ because there was courage to make the  
 “ attempt. And what hope could hence-  
 “ forth be entertained of secrecy among so  
 “ many affrighted accomplices ? Would  
 “ the obligation of an oath be felt, amidst  
 “ the pangs of punishment, and the allure-  
 “ ments of recompense ? What was to be  
 “ apprehended ? Death was inevitable, an  
 “ ignominious death ! Was it not much



“ more desirable to perish in embracing  
 “ their common country, in imploring  
 “ succour for liberty, to fall by the deser-  
 “ tion of the soldiers and of the people;  
 “ should they abandon her, and thus be  
 “ rendered at once worthy of their ances-  
 “ tors, and of immortality ?”

The Roman Conspirator did not follow  
 this advice, and died by the hands of the  
 executioner. The Russian likewise thought  
 “ that a premature explosion would irre-  
 “ trievably ruin every thing; that were  
 “ they to succeed in exciting a revolt at  
 “ Petersburg, it would only be the com-  
 “ mencement of a civil war, the Emperor  
 “ having at his command a fortified city, a  
 “ fleet ready to sail, three thousand men  
 “ of his native troops of Holstein, and all  
 “ the other troops which had marched off  
 “ to join the army; that the night pre-  
 “ sented nothing favourable, since in these  
 “ climes,

“climes, at that season, it is light all  
 “night long; that the absent Empress  
 “could not possibly arrive before the  
 “morning; that it was necessary to pay  
 “attention to consequences; and that it  
 “would be time enough the next day to  
 “regulate future proceedings, as events  
 “should turn up.” In this manner rea-  
 soned Count Panin, who always tempo-  
 rizes, and he went to bed.

The Princess d’Aschekof heard him out,  
 and departed. It was midnight. This  
 woman of eighteen assumes the dress of a  
 man, leaves her house without a single at-  
 tendant, and makes the best of her way to  
 a bridge, which she knew to be a common  
 rendezvous of the conspirators. Orlof was  
 there in the midst of his brothers. It is  
 pleasing to observe how fortune seconded  
 vigilance. At the news of Passig’s being  
 arrested, on the proposition of instantly  
 entering



entering on action, they all remained immovable; and joy succeeding this first surprise, all consented to it with transport. One of these brothers, who in consequence of the scar of a gash received in the face at a public game, had got the nickname of BALAFRÉ (gashed), a common soldier, who would have been of singular beauty, had his physionomy been less ferocious, and in whom were united both agility and strength, was sent by the Princess, entrusted with a note, which contained these words: "Come, Madam, time presses." The others, with the Princess, passed the night in preparing for the insurrection, with so much sagacity, that the moment the Empress should arrive, every thing might be ready, or if any obstacle should detain that Princess, no imprudent explosion could betray their designs. They even had a presentiment that the enter-  
prise

prise might miscarry; and in this case they had secured the flight of the Empress into Sweden. Orlof and his friend loaded each of them a pistol, and exchanged it, swearing never to make use of this weapon in the most imminent danger, and to reserve it, if the enterprize failed, for the purpose of putting each other to death. The Princess made no preparation on her own account; punishment the most dreadful had become a matter of indifference to her.

The Empress was eight leagues off, at the Castle of Petershoff, and under pretence of leaving to the Emperor, who was expected there that very day, the free use of all the apartments, as if she apprehended her presence might incommode that prince and his court, she had taken up her residence in a detached pavilion. This pavilion, built on the banks of a canal, has a communication



communication with the river, and a boat fastened under the windows of the Empress, might, on the very first alarm, have contributed to her escape.

Orlof the *Balafré* had been instructed by his brother in the most intricate windings of the garden and of the pavilion. This soldier awaked his sovereign, and thinking at this moment of usurping to his family all the honour of the revolution, he had the happy boldness to suppress the billet of the Princess d'Aschekof, and said to the Empress, in her first surprize at being awaked: "Madam, there is not a moment to lose; come:" and without waiting for an answer, he quitted her, redescended, and disappeared.

The Empress filled with inexpressible astonishment, dressed herself, and continued in a state of irresolute suspense, when this same man, traversing on horse-back the

the alleys of the park with the rapidity of lightning, returned to her and exclaimed: "Yonder is your carriage;" and the Empress, as if hurried away involuntarily without having time to take any resolution, ran to the gate of the park, holding by the arm of Catharine Ivanowena. She there found a carriage which the *Balafré* had brought from a farm at a considerable distance, where, for two days past, through the care of the Princess d'Aschekof, it had been constantly in readiness; either because the impatience of the guards evinced clearly that they should be under the necessity of speedily bursting out, or that the Empress might possess an additional means of escape from all danger; having at the same time secured relays of fresh horses as far as the neighbouring frontiers.

The carriage set off, driven by peasants, and drawn by eight hired horses; but all

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the



the horses of this country being of the Tartar breed; still preserve their swiftness. Catharine retained such freedom of mind, that on the road she amused herself by laughing with her attendant at some little disorder which was in their dress.

They perceived at a distance an open carriage, which was proceeding with extreme rapidity; and as this same road led to where the Emperor was, they beheld it with uneasiness. It was Orlof, the favourite, flying to meet his mistress, and who, after crying out to her, "Every thing is ready," turned about, and led the way with the same rapidity. They flew towards the city, Orlof alone in the first carriage, the Empress and her attendant in the second, and behind was the *Balafre* with a soldier who had accompanied him.

As they approached the city, they met a French valet-de-chambre, named Michel,  
to

to whom the Empress had shewn singular kindness, condescending so far as to be his confidante, and charging herself with the education of all his bastards. He was coming to attend the duties of the toilette, and beheld, with astonishment, the Empress in the midst of so whimsical a retinue. She bent forward her head, and called out to him: "Follow me;" and Michel, with a beating heart, thought he was following her into Siberia.

Thus, to reign despotically over the most extensive empire in the world, did Catharine arrive, between seven and eight o'clock in the morning, having set out on the bare word of a common soldier, driven by peasants, conducted by her lover, and accompanied by her waiting woman and her hair dresser.

It was necessary to traverse the whole city in order to reach the barracks, by



which it is bounded on the east, and which form on that side a real camp. They took the direct road to the two companies of the regiment of *Ismailof*, which had already taken the oath. The soldiers had not yet left their rooms, because an apprehension was entertained that all might be ruined by a premature declaration. The Empress alighted upon the road which runs round the barracks; and whilst her conductors ran to announce her arrival, she crossed, leaning upon her attendant, a wide space which separates the barracks from the road. She was received by about thirty soldiers, who came out in dishabille, adjusting their dress, some in frocks, some in their shirts. This sight astonished her: she grew pale; her whole frame was visibly agitated. But during this agitation, which only rendered her more interesting, she told them, "That she came to throw herself into their arms,"

"that

" that the Emperor had given orders to  
 " put both her and her son to death, that  
 " the assassins had already set out to exe-  
 " cute this order." They all swore, with  
 one voice, to die in her defence. The of-  
 ficers assembled: the crowd increased.  
 She sent for the chaplain of the regiment  
 with orders to bring a crucifix: the priest  
 came, pale and trembling, and, holding a  
 crucifix in his hand, he received, without  
 knowing what he did, the oath of the sol-  
 diers. Then arrived Count Rozamouski,  
 more faithful to her person than to the  
 friendship of the Emperor. He was fol-  
 lowed by General Volskouski, nephew to  
 the Chancellor, who had fallen into dis-  
 grace, for having, amongst other reasons,  
 been so entirely devoted to that Princess;  
 by Count Shouvalof, who, under the last  
 reign, had used his unbounded power with  
 singular moderation, and whom the re-  
 membrance



membrance of Elizabeth rendered still dear to the soldiers; by Count de Bruce, first major of the guards; and by Count Strogonoff, whose lady, as well as the Countess de Bruce, were then with the Emperor, celebrated both of them for their beauty, and named amongst those, who were going, as it was said, to be unmarried. There were some in this first croud, who proclaimed the Empress regent. Orlof ran towards them, exclaiming, "That the work must not be done by halves, to run the risk of punishment in order to have one day to begin again; and that the first who should pronounce the word *regency*, he would stab with his own hand."

Major Chapelof, upon whom they had reckoned, did not arrive; and the first order which the Empress gave, was: "Go tell him that I have no occasion for him; and let him be put under an arrest."

consideration

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The subaltern officers joined their companies from all parts, and made them take arms; it is remarkable, that of the great number of private officers who had passed their word, one alone, named Pouskine, had the misfortune, or the weakness, to draw back. The Empress went round this kind of camp, formed by the barracks, and walked through the ranks of each of the three regiments of foot-guards; a guard so formidable to it's Sovereigns, which, formerly, composed of strangers by Peter the first, constituted his security against the factions of the Russians, but which, since that period, augmented in number, and entirely composed of Russians, has already thrice disposed of the regency or of the crown. As she advanced from the barracks of the regiment of *Ismailof* to those of that of *Simonoski*, at the head of this first regiment, the soldiers whom she had

excited



excited merely by a display of her dangers, cried out: "That in marching at their head, she was not in safety," and formed of their own accord a hollow square around her. Throughout all the barracks only two officers of the regiment of Ascension *Préobasinski* opposed their men, and were arrested. In passing before the prison of this regiment where the conspirator Passig was detained, she sent orders for his enlargement. And this man, who was preparing to undergo every kind of torture without making any discovery, astonished at such unexpected intelligence, had the presence of mind to mistrust it, and apprehending it to be a snare to draw from him, in his first surprise, an avowal of the conspiracy, he refused to be liberated. The three regiments being assembled, and the soldiers having joined in a cry of *houra*, thought the enterprize finished, and all asked

asked leave to kiss the hand of the Empress. She repressed this extravagant enthusiasm, mildly representing to them that she had at that time other affairs on hand. Orlof had run towards the regiment of artillery, a numerous and very formidable body, almost all the soldiers of which wore some honourable badge for having distinguished themselves in the bloody battles against the King of Prussia. He presumed so far upon the credit which his office of treasurer in this corps would give him over the soldiers, as to hope to be able to make them take arms; but they refused to obey him, and demanded to be informed what their General said.

This was Villebois, a French refugee, grand master of the artillery, and of the corps of engineers, a man of approved valour, and of singular probity. For some time, beloved by Catharine, he still believ-

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ed



ed himself so. It was through him, even in the hour of her disgrace, that she had procured for Orlof the office of treasurer, so useful to her projects. But Orlof, wishing, no doubt, to break the connections between this man and the Empress, had excluded him from the conspiracy. He was at this moment engaged with the engineers. One of the conspirators came and told him, "That the Empress, his Sovereign, commanded his attendance at the barracks of the guards." Villebois, astonished at this order, demanded, "What then is the Emperor dead?" The messenger made no reply, except by repeating the same words; and Villebois, turning towards the engineers, said, "Every man is mortal," and followed the aid-de-camp.

Villebois, who, till this moment, had flattered himself with being beloved by Catherine,

rine, when he arrived at the barracks, and saw her surrounded by such a crowd, perceived, with the deepest chagrin, that so great a project had been carried through without his having even been made privy to it. He adored the Empress, yet wishing to convey to her a delicate reproach, disguised under an excuse, real or pretended, for the difficulties which he would find in seconding this enterprise, from his unfortunately not having been in the secret: "You ought to have foreseen, Madam," said he—She hastened to interrupt him, and replied with the most severe haughtiness: "I did not send for you to tell me what I ought to have foreseen, but to ask you what is your determination." He fell upon his knees, saying, "To obey you, Madam;" and he departed to order the regiment of artillery to take to their arms,



and to deliver up to the Empress all the arsenals.

Of all those whose attachment to the Emperor was known, Prince George of Holstein, his uncle, was the only one in the city. An aid-de-camp came to inform him that there was an insurrection in the barracks; he was dressing himself in great haste, when he was arrested with all his family. The Empress, already surrounded by ten thousand men, mounted the same carriage, and well aware of the genius of her people, she conducted them to the principal church of the city, where she alighted to perform her devotions. From thence she went to a vast palace, which on one side is washed by the river, and on the other overlooks an immense square. This palace was surrounded by soldiers, as far as it could be done. Cannons were planted at every opening, with  
lighted

lighted matches. The cross ways and the squares were occupied by detached parties; and, in order to prevent the Emperor from having any knowledge of what was going on, orders were issued that a bridge, which leads from the suburbs of Petersburg, to that part of the country where he then resided, should be guarded by a detachment; but the orders came too late. In so great a city, one man only, a stranger, had thought of informing the Emperor; his name was Bressan, born in the principality of Monaco, of a family originally from Russia, but naturalized in France. He had availed himself of his name of Frenchman, in order to find, with more certainty, entertainment and protection: an intelligent and honest man, whom the Emperor had taken from the profession of a hair-dresser, to raise him to the highest fortune, and who, at least upon this occasion, justified, by his fidelity, this excess of favour. He had



had dispatched a servant of some ability, disguised as a peasant, and mounted on a little country cart, and believing, that on such an occasion he ought to mistrust all those who surrounded the Emperor, he had commanded his emissary to give his billet into the hands of no one but the Prince himself. This pretended peasant had just passed, when the detachment arrived to take possession of the bridge.

An officer, with a numerous escort, ran, by order of the Empress, for the Grand Duke, who slept in another palace. The boy, already apprized of the dangers which threatened his life, awoke, surrounded by soldiers, and expressed symptoms of a terror, the impression of which continued for a long time. His Governor, Panin, who till this moment had remained with his pupil, tried to dispel his apprehensions, took him in his arms, dressed in his night  
cloaths

cloaths as he was, and carried him thus to his mother. She presented him from a balcony to the soldiery and the people. An innumerable crowd had collected. All the other regiments of the city had joined the regiments of guards. The acclamations were long redoubled, and all the caps of the crowd were thrown at the same instant into the air. A report was spread that the Emperor was approaching. The crowd driven back, but without tumult, divided, pressed together, and, in profound silence, made way for a train, which advanced slowly through the midst of them. It was a pompous funeral, which had passed through the principal streets, without any body's ever having known to whom it belonged. Soldiers, wearing mourning cloaks over their uniforms, carried torches in their hands, and whilst the whole attention of the crowd was rivetted to the spot, the

train

train



train gradually disappeared. Since that period the Princess d'Aschekof has been several times spoken to concerning it, whose only answer has always been ; " Our precautions were well taken."

It is probable that this machine was put in play, in order to diffuse amongst the populace and the slaves, a vague rumour of the death of the Emperor ; to remove by this means, were it only for the moment, every idea of resistance, and by thus joining surprize to seduction, to render the proclamation general and unanimous. And certain it is, of all this multitude which choaked up the streets and the square, scarcely twenty persons, even in the Palace, knew precisely what they were about. The commonalty and the soldiers not knowing whether the Emperor was really alive or dead, and continuing to repeat in their acclamations the word *houra*, which is nothing

thing more than a cry of joy, without any other meaning, believed they were proclaiming the young Grand Duke, Emperor, and giving the Regency only to the mother. Several of the conspirators, in their first eagerness to inform their friends, had written to them this false intelligence. The tumult had assumed an air of joy on this account. No idea of injustice disturbed the public happiness, and friends embraced each other with mutual congratulations. But a manifesto which was distributed throughout the city soon disclosed the true design: a printed manifesto, which Odard, the Piedmontese, had concealed for several days in his apartment, not without the most deadly apprehensions: and this man the next day said, appearing to breathe more at his ease: "At length I am under no apprehensions of being broke upon the wheel." This writing announced,

P

"That



“ That the Empress Catharine the Second,  
 “ yielding to the prayers of her people, had  
 “ mounted the throne of her beloved coun-  
 “ try, to save it from ruin;” then after in-  
 veighing against the Emperor, she kindled  
 into indignation against the King of Prus-  
 sia, and against the plundering of the cler-  
 gy. Such was the language used by a  
 German Princess, who has since cemented  
 that alliance, and accomplished that pil-  
 lage.

All the grandees, learning this news  
 upon their awaking, flocked to the palace;  
 and it was not one of the least interesting  
 scenes in this great drama, to behold their  
 physionomies expressive at once of joy and  
 of uneasiness, and in which eagerness and  
 smiles were mingled with paleness and ap-  
 prehension. They beheld, on entering the  
 palace, the celebration of a solemn mass,  
 priests receiving the oath of fidelity, and  
 the

the Empress practising every art of seduction. A tumultuous council was held in her presence, upon what course they should next pursue. Each one excited by the danger, and endeavouring to make himself of importance, proposed, and discovered ardor to execute. Being no longer under the necessity of taking any precautions against the city, which by this time was completely gained over, and being able to leave Petersburg behind, without any apprehension, it was determined that all this host should be instantly led against the Emperor. A great murmur which arose among the soldiers, interrupted the council. Always alarmed for the safety of the Empress, still persuaded that the pretended assassins, dispatched to kill her and her son, were going every moment to arrive, they considered her as too much exposed in this



vast palace, which being washed by the river on one side, and being still unfinished, appeared totally defenceless; they could not, they said, answer for her safety. They demanded with loud cries, that she should be conducted to an ancient palace built of wood, much smaller, which overlooks the same square, and which they could encompass round and round. The Empress accordingly crossed the square, amidst the most tumultuous acclamations. Beer and brandy were distributed to the soldiers. All of them had resumed their ancient uniforms, having thrown away, with marks of derision, a new uniform in the Prussian style, which the Emperor had just given them, and which, in that frozen climate, left the soldiers almost naked. They received with hisses such as ran with precipitation to cloathe themselves in this new dress ;

dress; and the new caps, tossed from hand to hand, like so many balls, became an amusement to the populace.

One regiment alone maintained a chagrined and serious air: it was a very fine regiment of cavalry, of which the Emperor had been Colonel from his infancy, which he had ordered to town as soon as he had mounted the throne, and which he had permitted to rank with the regiments of guards. The officers of this corps had refused to march; they were all arrested, and other officers, in different uniforms, were appointed to lead on the soldiers, whose ill will was evident.

Towards noon, the principal of the Russian clergy, all of them old men of a venerable aspect, (it is well known of what importance the smallest things, capable of affecting the imagination, become in such decisive moments) all with fine white hair,  
and



and long white beards, all dressed in splendid and dignified garments, carrying the ornaments of consecration, the crown, the imperial globe, the ancient volumes, in peaceful and majestic procession passed along the whole of this army, on which a sentiment of respect impressed a momentary silence. They ascended to the palace to consecrate the Empress, and that spectacle imprinted on every heart an indescribable emotion, which seemed to legalize violence and usurpation.

As soon as she was consecrated, she dressed herself in the ancient uniform of the guards, which she borrowed of a young officer of the same stature with herself. To the impressive ceremonies of religion succeeded a toilet in the martial style, in which the charms of gallantry added a still divelier interest, in which this young and beautiful woman took, with the most seducing  
 gracefulness,

gracefulness, from the several noblemen who surrounded her, a hat, a sword, and, above all, the ribbon of the first order of the Empire, which her husband had quitted, with a determination no longer to wear any other than that of Prussia. In this new dress she mounted on horseback at the gate of her palace, and accompanied by the Princess d'Aschekoff, likewise on horseback, and in the uniform of the guards, she rode round the grand square, announced herself to the troops as having an intention to be herself their General; and by her smiling and intrepid air, she gave to the multitude that confidence which she herself had derived from them.

The régiments began to file off, in order to leave the city, and march against the Emperor. The Empress re-entered her palace, and dined close to an open window, which



which looked towards the square. From the manner in which she held her glass, she appeared to salute the troops, who answered by a long acclamation. She then remounted her horse, and departed at the head of her army.

A whole city had changed its Sovereign, an army had revolted, yet without the least disorder; and after their departure, there remained not at Petersburg the least symptom of commotion. About six o'clock a regiment of three thousand cossacks, which was passing by at some distance, and which the emissaries of the Empress had fallen in with before those of the Emperor, had passed through the city, in order to follow her, well armed, well mounted, and officered by men of singular politeness. This procession had the appearance of the celebration of some festival, which impressed

sed upon every imagination the idea of the good fortune of the Empress, and added to the public security.

A short geographical description will be necessary to elucidate the events which I am going to relate. The river Neva falls into the sea at the extremity of the Gulf of Finland, and appears as if it were a prolongation of that Gulf. At twelve leagues distance from its mouth, and upon several islands where the breadth of the different channels forms a most delightful prospect, stands the city of Petersburg, built about sixty years ago, on a low and marshy soil; but which, by the want of solidity in the first hastily constructed buildings, and by the frequency of conflagrations, is already, by means of the ruins, raised more than three feet. In going down the river, the right bank is still uncultivated, and covered with extensive forests. The left bank is

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bordered



bordered by a ridge of hills, which preserve the same height throughout, until the two sides of the river stretch out as far as the eye can reach, and leave between them nothing but a vast sea. At this point, on the top of the heights, in a delightful situation, is the castle of Oranienbaum. It was built by the celebrated Menchikof; and upon the disgrace of that favourite, the confiscation of his property transferred it to the crown. It was the appropriate country residence where the Emperor had spent the days of his youth. For his instruction, a kind of fortress had been built there, the ramparts of which were scarcely six feet high, constructed merely to convey to the young Prince an idea of a great fortification, in itself useless for any purpose of defence. With the same view, they had collected an arsenal, of no use as a repository of arms, and which could be considered

dered only as a cabinet of military curiosities, among which were preserved the most glorious trophies of the Empire, the standards taken from the Swedes and Prussians. The Emperor was remarkably attached to this castle, and there he now was with three thousand men of his own troops of Holstein.

Opposite, and in sight of this castle, in the very mouth of the river, is built, upon an island, the city of Cronstadt. The houses, constructed during the reign of Peter the First, and always uninhabited, are beginning to tumble into ruins; it's harbour is safe and commodious, and appears on that side of the island which looks to Oranienbaum. All this side is strongly fortified. The fortifications upon the other side have not been finished, but this branch of the river, sufficiently dangerous of itself, had been rendered impracticable, by



throwing in enormous masses of rock. It was in the harbour of this island that a great part of the fleet, ready to sail for Holstein, well provided with every necessary, and fully manned, was stationed under the immediate direction of the Emperor. The other part of the fleet, equally under his command, was at Revel, an ancient city, situated farther off upon the same gulf.

Along the heights which hang over the river, between Oranienbaum and Petersburg, are built, in pleasant woods, and at a little distance from each other, the country seats of the Russian nobility. In the midst of them is a magnificent palace built by Peter the first, on his return from France, in the hope of being able to imitate, in his gardens, by the assistance of the sea, the water-works of Versailles. It was here that they had just sent to find the

Empress;

Empress; and her residence, as may be seen, was happily chosen: between Petersburg, where the conspiracy was going forward; Oranienbaum, where the court was; and the neighbouring coast of Finland, which was reserved as her asylum. It was to this castle, named Petershoff, that is, *Peterscourt*, that the Emperor was to come that very day, Saint Peter's day, to celebrate the festival of the Saint whose name he bore.

This Prince was in the most perfect security. When they informed him of the symptoms of a conspiracy, and even told him the news of a conspirator's having been arrested, he replied: "He is some mad-man." He had set out from Oranienbaum, and was proceeding gaily, in a large open carriage, with his mistress, the Prussian minister, and a selection of the finest women of his court. Every countenance  
appeared



appeared to be animated by the pleasures of the festival; but at Petershoff, whither he had almost arrived, every thing was already in confusion. They had discovered the flight of the Empress. They had sought for her in vain in the gardens and in the woods. A sentinel said he had seen, about four in the morning, two ladies go out of the park. Those who arrived from Petersburg, not suspecting what had been going on in the barracks at the time of their departure, not only brought no news, but affirmed with oaths that there was nothing new. One of these and one of the chamberlains of the Empress, were making the best of their way on foot, upon the road by which the Emperor was coming. They met his favourite, the aid-de-camp Goudowitz, who preceded him on horseback. They thought it best to communicate the intelligence to him. The aid-

aid-de-camp returned with all speed, stopped the coach, in spite of the Emperor, who called out, "What nonsense is this?" and approached to whisper in his ear. The Emperor grew pale and said: "Let me be set down." He stopped some time on the road, and questioned his aid-de camp with great eagerness; and, perceiving they were near one of the park gates, he ordered all the ladies to alight, left them in the middle of the road surprized and alarmed at this movement, of the cause of which they were ignorant; only told them to join him at the castle by the alleys of the park, and remounted the carriage precipitately with a few men. He drove with prodigious speed, ran, upon his arrival, to the chamber of the Empress, looked under the bed, opened the closets, struck the cieling and the wainscots with his cane; and, seeing his mistress running towards him

surrounded



surrounded by all these young women, he cried out to her: "I was in the right when "I told you she was capable of any thing." Around him, all his courtiers, suspecting in their hearts the fatal truth, kept a profound silence, either that, in mistrust of each other, they perceived already all they had to provide against, or even perhaps dreading at such a time to incense their Sovereign by alarming him. The lowest of the domestics, instructed by the peasants whom they had met in the woods, or by their own conjectures, were already recounting to each other what was going on at Petersburg, whilst the court appeared to suspect nothing of the matter. A foreign lackey arriving from the city, (he was a young Frenchman, who, full of the notions of his own country, having seen the tumult commence, without ever conceiving what was the object of it) very much astonished

nished at the consternation which he found at Petershoff, happened to say, with somewhat of precipitation, " that the Empress " was not lost; that she was at Peters- " burgh; and that the festival of St. Peter " was going to be kept there in a superior " stile of elegance, for that all the troops " were drawn up in arms." Whilst the Emperor, through the simplicity of this recital, discovered that his reign was at an end, a peasant, taking advantage of the general confusion, entered, making, according to the custom of his country, a number of signs of the cross and prostrations, advanced towards the Emperor in silence, drew a billet out of his bosom, and put it into his hands with eyes lifted up to heaven.

It was that servant in disguise, who, in obedience to the orders which he had received from his master, to put this billet

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into no other hands but those of the Prince himself, had already to no purpose sought to find access to him in the woods. Every one, in silence and uncertainty, surrounded the Emperor, who, having cast his eyes over the billet, read it aloud. It was conceived in these terms: "The regiments of guards are under arms, the Empress is at their head; nine o'clock strikes, she is entering into the church of Cazan; all the people appear to follow this movement, and the faithful subjects of your Majesty do not appear." The Emperor exclaimed: "Well, Gentlemen, you see that I judged right." Immediately the principal man of the empire, the High Chancellor Woronsof, having spoken of his influence over the minds of the people, and over that of the Empress, proposed going to Petersburgh; and indeed, upon reaching the Empress, he sagely represented

ed to her all the consequences of that enterprize. She replied, pointing to the people, and the army, "It is not my act, but that of the whole nation." The High Chancellor replied, that he saw it very plainly, took the oath to her, and hastened to add; "That being unable to serve her on a military expedition, and fearing, after the representations he had just made to her, that he might be an object of suspicion, he entreated her to put him under arrest at his own house, under the guard of an officer, who should on no account quit him;" and thus, whatever might be the event, he found himself secure on both sides.

In the mean time the Emperor sent orders to his troops of Holstein to come to him immediately, with their field pieces. Hussars were dispatched in every direction toward Petersburg to gain intelligence;



to all the neighbouring villages to assemble the peasantry; and to all the regiments which had filed off to the environs, to recall them if it was yet time. He appointed, as commander in chief, that Chamberlain of the Empress who had come to meet him, to give him notice of her flight. He gave orders to send to Petersburg for his own regiment, and many laid hold of that pretext to desert him. He flew about like a madman. He gave directions instantly to put the Empress to death. He frequently called for drink. He dictated against her two long manifestoes, filled with the most bitter invectives. He employed a great number of his courtiers in transcribing, and of Hussars in distributing, copies of them. Finally, in this extremity he resolved to leave off the Prussian uniform and ribbon, and resumed the insignia of the Russian empire.

This

This whole court traversed the gardens, scattered about, and lost in consternation : but Munick wished to save his benefactor. The reputation of his former victories had procured him admission into this Court, so military-mad ; and after twenty years banishment, finding nothing there but that new exercise, become the universal mania of Europe, and in which the youngest lieutenant infallibly surpasses the oldest general, he had hitherto preserved silence. But in times of imminent danger, great talents resume, of themselves, all their ascendancy ; and without doubt, he promised himself, in saving the Emperor, to become once more master of the Empire. He made a calculation to this Prince both of the advantage of time and force possessed by the Empress ; concluded, “ that she would arrive in a few hours with “ twenty thousand men and a formidable  
“ train



“train of artillery ;” proved, “that nei-  
 “ther Petershoff, where they were, nor its  
 “vicinity, could possibly be put in a state  
 “of defence ;” and added, “that from the  
 “knowledge which he had of the Russian  
 “soldiery, a slight resistance would only  
 “occasion the massacre of the Emperor,  
 “and of the women who accompanied  
 “him ; that Cronstadt presented to him  
 “both safety and victory ; that it contained  
 “a numerous garrison, and a fleet ready  
 “for sea ; that all the women he had about  
 “him would become so many hostages ;  
 “that every thing depended on gaining a  
 “single day ; that this popular movement,  
 “this commotion of a night, would sub-  
 “side of itself, or, if it should continue,  
 “the Emperor might oppose at least equal  
 “force, and make Petersburgh tremble.”

This advice revived their drooping spi-  
 rits. Even those who had already medi-  
 tated

tated their escape, seeing the event becoming uncertain, resolved to follow the Emperor, to remain attached to his fortune, if he proved successful, or to watch the opportunity, if he failed, of betraying him for their own advantage. A General who was devoted to him, was sent to Cronstadt, to take the command of that city, and an aid-de camp returned to announce, " that  
 " the garrison remained steady in their  
 " allegiance, that they were determined to  
 " die for the Emperor, that he was expected  
 " there, and that they were labouring with  
 " the most earnest zeal to prepare for it's  
 " defence."

In the interval his Holsteinese troops having arrived, and the certainty of an asylum affording him some security, he was anxious that they should be brought into action. His military mania seizing him, he said, " that it would be base to fly with-  
 " out



“ out having seen the enemy.” Two yachts had been brought close to the water-side; and having in vain attempted to persuade him to embark, buffoons and favourite lacqueys were employed to bring him to that resolution, but he treated them as poltrons. He examined what advantage might be taken of some little heights. While he was losing himself in making these silly dispositions, intelligence was received by some hussars, who had been carried off by those of the Empress in advancing to reconnoitre; that in Petersburg every thing had yielded to this Princess, and that she was at the head of twenty thousand men. While the clock was striking eight, an aid-de-camp arrived post-haste to announce, that this army, in order of battle, was upon it's march to Petershoff. At this news the Emperor, followed by his whole court, hurried to the water-side,

side, threw themselves on board the two yachts; and the formidable expedient which Munick had suggested, was followed merely from fear. Perhaps we ought not to omit mentioning one trait, unimportant indeed in itself, did it not demonstrate with what profound indifference one may be a witness of such tremendous events. An eye-witness of this flight, who remained quietly on shore, having given an account of it the next day, was asked, "how it was possible for him to refrain from following his master, on an embarkation to contend for his crown and life?" He replied, "I was, indeed, ready to embark, but it was late, the wind was in the north, and I had no cloak."

They made for Cronstadt with press of oar and sail; but, since the answer brought by the aid-de-camp, there had happened in that city a very extraordinary change.

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In the tumultuous council, which in the morning had been held at Petersburg, while the insurrection was at the height, the city of Cronstadt had been for a long time overlooked. A young German officer was the first who mentioned its name, and that single word procured for him a well-merited recompence. A Russian, Vice-Admiral Talizine, undertook to go to that city, and departed alone in a shallop. He forbade his bargemen, as they valued their lives, to tell whence he came. On his arrival at Cronstadt, the Commandant, who had given orders, that no one should enter without his express permission, happened to be on the spot as he approached, and perceiving he came unattended, permitted him to come on shore. He asked him the news: Talizine replied, "That he knew of none; that at his country-house, which he had just left, he heard  
 " a rumour

“ a rumour of some disturbances at Peters-  
 burgh ; and that as his proper station  
 “ was on board, he had made the best of  
 “ his way to his post.” The Commandant  
 believed him, but as soon as he had parted  
 with Talizine, this last collects a few sol-  
 diers, proposes to them to arrest him, and  
 said to them, “ the Emperor is dethroned ;  
 “ you must make a merit of giving up  
 “ Cronstadt to the Empress, and your for-  
 “ tune is made.” They followed him. He  
 arrested the Commandant ; and having as-  
 sembled the garrison and the marine troops,  
 he harangued them, and persuaded them  
 to take the oaths to the Empress. Already  
 they perceived, at a distance, the two im-  
 perial galleys ; and Talizine, become mas-  
 ter of that city by a bold stroke, was sen-  
 sible, that the sight alone of the Emperor  
 would expose every thing again to danger,  
 and that it was necessary to prevent men



from pursuing their reflections. Immediately, by his order, the alarm-bell was rung in the city; the whole garrison prepared to fire, line the ramparts; two hundred matches blaze at the touch-hole of as many cannon. Towards ten in the evening, the Emperor's yacht arrives, and they prepared to disembark. A cry is raised of, "Who lives?"—"The Emperor."—"There is no Emperor." At this terrible word, he raised himself up, advances, and drawing aside his cloak to shew his order, he says: "It is I; don't you know me?" and prepares to come on shore. The whole guards joined to the sentinels on duty, presented their bayonets, the Commandant threatens to fire if they did not retreat; the Emperor falls into the arms of those who followed him; and from the shore Talizine calls aloud to the two yachts to push off, or he would pour a complete discharge of the artillery

tillery upon them. The whole multitude repeats, "Off with the galley, off with the galley"—with such a violent rage, that the Captain, under the shower of bullets which was going to tear him to pieces, took a speaking trumpet, and cried, "We are going to move off; give us time to unmoor." And that no time might be lost, he ordered the cables to be cut. The sound of the speaking trumpet produced, in the city, a tremendous silence; and, as the galley retired, a shout still more tremendous of "Long live the Empress Catharine." Whilst they were retreating with the utmost exertion of the rowers, the Emperor said, weeping: "The plot is general; I have foreseen this conspiracy from the first day of my reign." He went down, rather dead than alive, into the cabin of the yacht, whither his mistress, and the father of that young woman, were



were the only persons who followed him. The two vessels, when got beyond the reach of cannon shot, stopped; and, no orders being given, they remained as if in expectation of them, lying upon their oars. The whole night, which was calm, passed away in this manner, Munick remaining quietly upon deck, contemplating the beauty of the evening; and so true it is, that the pleasant may unite with the terrible—some of the young women, as they themselves have related, repeated to each other in a whisper, the proverb from the comedy: “What had we to do in this galley?”

When the whole troops of the Empress had left the city, and were arranged in order of battle, it was too late for the army to make much progress the same day. That Princess, from the fatigues of the preceding night, and of such a day, took a few hours

hours rest at a castle on the road. On her arrival at this place, she had called for some refreshments and had presented part of them to some of the subaltern officers, who were zealous in offering her their services; she said to them: "I wish to have nothing that I cannot divide with you."

They intended marching against the Holsteinese troops, which had been drawn up before Petershoff; but after the embarkation of the Emperor, they had received orders to return to Oranienbaum, and Petershoff was evacuated. However, the peasants of the neighbouring villages, whom they had sent to collect, were arrived there, armed with pitch-forks and scythes, and, finding neither troops nor orders, waited, in a state of total confusion, to see what they were to do, under the command of the hussars, who had assembled them. Orlof, the first volunteer in the army, who advanced



vanced about five in the morning to reconnoitre, fell upon these poor fellows with blows from the flat side of his sabre, crying aloud: "Long live the Empress!" They fled, throwing down their arms, and repeating: "Long live the Empress!" The army having then advanced without any obstacle beyond Petershoff, the Empress re-entered as Sovereign into that castle, from which she had gone out as a fugitive twenty four hours before.

In the mean time the Emperor, who had remained on the water, and reduced from a power so vast, in the space of a few hours, to two pleasure yachts, his useless fortress of Oranienbaum, and a few dispirited foreign troops, without ammunition, and without provisions, between a fleet ready to pour forth it's whole thunder upon him, an army in the first rage of sedition, and two cities which rejected him, called field-marshal

Marshal Munick into the cabin of his vessel, and said to him: "Field-Marshal, I ought to have followed your advice sooner; but under the present circumstances, you, who have experienced so many extremities, what is there still left me to do?" Munick replied, "That nothing was lost; that he must, without losing an instant, push forward to Revel, there take a ship of war, set sail for Prussia, where his army was, re-enter his states at the head of eighty thousand men, and he pledged himself, that in six weeks, he would give him back his empire, in a state of subjection."

The courtiers, and the young women had entered with Munick, to hear from his lips, what hope yet remained; they replied, "that the rowers had not sufficient strength left to carry them to Revel"—"Very well," said Munick, "we will all put our  
T " hands



“hands to the oar and help them.” The whole court shuddered at this proposition; and, whether flattery had not yet forsaken this unhappy Prince, or whether he was surrounded by treachery; for how is it possible to distinguish the difference of their language? They represented to him, “That he was very far from being reduced to such an extremity; that it did not become so powerful an Emperor to depart from his kingdom in a single vessel; that it was not possible the whole nation could have revolted against him, and that without doubt the intention of this commotion was to effect a reconciliation between him and his wife.”

Peter made up his mind to attempt a reconciliation; and, with the air of a man who is going to grant a pardon, he ordered himself to be landed at Oranienbaum. But his domestics, melted into tears, having

ing come to receive him on the beach, he said to them: "My children, all is over with us," and their consternation recalled all his own. By them he was informed, that the army of the Empress was already at hand, and immediately he gave secret orders to saddle, with the utmost dispatch, one of his fleetest horses, determined to fly alone, and in disguise, till he should reach Poland. But the agitation of his mind very soon reducing him to a state of indecision, his mistress, seduced by the hopes of finding an asylum, and perhaps, at the same time, a throne for herself, persuaded him to send to the Empress to ask permission for them to depart together for the Duchy of Holstein. This was, according to her idea, giving up every thing to the Empress, who could desire nothing better than an accommodation so favourable to her ambitious views; and, when the servants of the



Emperor exclaimed, "Father she will put  
 "you to death," his mistress replied to  
 them, "Why will you terrify your mas-  
 "ter?"

This was his last resolution; and imme-  
 diately on the general representation, that  
 the only possible means of escaping the first  
 fury of the soldiers, was not to make the  
 slightest resistance, he gave orders to dis-  
 mantle every thing which could have con-  
 tributed to a short defence, caused the can-  
 non to be dismounted, his soldiers to be  
 disbanded, and to lay down their arms. At  
 this spectacle, Munick, fired with indigna-  
 tion, demanded, "If he did not know how  
 "to die like an Emperor, at the head of  
 "his troops? If you are afraid," said he to  
 him, "of the stroke of a sabre, take a cru-  
 "cifix in your hand, they will not dare to  
 "touch you; and leave me to lead the  
 "soldiers to battle." The Emperor persisted  
 in

in the determination which he had formed. He wrote to his wife, that he resigned to her the Empire of Russia, and asked her permission to retire into his Dutchy of Holstein, in company with the *frail* Woronsof, and his aid-de-camp Goudowitz. The Chamberlain, whom he had named his commander in chief, was charged with the delivery of this letter; and, in the mean time, all those of the courtiers of this Prince who could find small boats, threw themselves aboard, and, eager to abandon him, hastened to swell the new court.

The Empress, in reply, sent him a renunciation to sign, which was couched in the following terms:

“ During the short period of my unlimited government of the Russian Empire, I have clearly discovered that my powers were not sufficient to support so vast a burden, and that it was a task far  
“ above



“ above my abilities to rule that empire,  
 “ not merely as a Sovereign, but in any  
 “ manner whatever; I have likewise per-  
 “ ceived the convulsion it has under-  
 “ gone, which must have issued in it's  
 “ total ruin, and, at the same time, have  
 “ overwhelmed me in eternal disgrace.  
 “ After mature deliberation, therefore, upon  
 “ the subject, I declare, without compul-  
 “ sion, and in the most solemn manner,  
 “ to the Empire of Russia, and to all  
 “ the world, that I renounce, for my  
 “ whole life, the government of the said  
 “ empire, not wishing to reign over it either  
 “ as a Sovereign, or under any other form  
 “ of government, and without ever aspiring  
 “ to attain to it by any assistance whatso-  
 “ ever. In testimony of which, I make an  
 “ oath before God and the whole universe,  
 “ having written and subscribed this re-  
 “ nunciation with my own hand.”

What

What was any longer to be feared from a man who could so far demean himself as to transcribe and sign such a writing as this? Or what opinion must we form of a nation to whom this man was an object of terror?

The same Chamberlain, after having carried this renunciation to the Empress, returned immediately with orders to make the soldiers of Holstein lay down their arms. This they did with marks of indignation, and were confined in barns. He then caused the Emperor to go into a coach, accompanied by his mistress and his favourite, and carried them off, without any escort to Petershoff.

Peter, in putting himself into the power of his wife, was not entirely destitute of hope. The first troops which he met had never before seen him; they consisted of those three thousand Cossacks whom  
 chance



chance alone had brought to witness this event; they observed a profound silence, and the emotion which he could not suppress at their appearance, did not excite in them the least uneasiness. But as soon as the army perceived him, the unanimous shouts of "Long live Catharine," began to resound on every side. It was in the midst of this new proclamation, continued with unremitting fury, that he passed through all the regiments. His head turned. On arriving at the grand stair case, and alighting from the coach, his mistress was carried off by the soldiers, who tore off her ribbon. His favourite presuming to answer the soldiers with a haughty air, and to reproach them with the crime they were committing, was interrupted with loud bursts of laughter. The Emperor ascended alone, agitated with rage. They cried to him: "Undress yourself;" and no one of

of these rebels putting forth his hand to assist him, he himself tore off his ribbon, his sword, his clothes, saying, " Well then I am at your disposal." They permitted him to stand some minutes in his shirt, and barefooted, exposed to the derision of the soldiers. Thus was Peter for ever separated from his mistress and his favourite, and shortly after they were all three carried away in different directions, under strong escorts.

The city of Petersburg had been in a state of anxious expectation since the departure of the Empress; four and twenty hours had elapsed without any intelligence from her; and it could be easily perceived, from the different rumours which were circulated, that upon the slightest glimpse of hope the Emperor would still have found partizans there. Foreigners were not without terror, being well aware, that true Russians,



sians, detesting not only new manners, but every thing which comes to them from other countries, have sometimes demanded of their Sovereigns, as the reward of their services, permission to massacre strangers. Whatever the event might be, they were under dreadful apprehensions of the effects of the licentiousness or the fury of the soldiery.

Towards five o'clock in the evening the report of cannon was heard at a distance; the attention was general. They were soon able to distinguish, from the regular intervals of each discharge, that it was a salute of rejoicing; the event was easily conjectured; and from that moment nothing was perceivable in the general mind but a similar disposition.

The Empress slept at Petershoff, and next morning, at her levee, her former confidantes, who had abandoned her in the  
hour

hour of misfortune, the young females who had always followed the Emperor, the courtiers, who, in order to govern this Prince, had, for so many years, fomented the hatred which he bore to his wife, came in a body to prostrate their faces in the dust before her. Many of them were relations of the *frail* Woronsof, and the Princess d'Aschekof her sister, perceiving them on the ground, threw herself down amongst them, saying, "Madam, here is my family which I have sacrificed to you." The Empress received them all with the most fascinating kindness. In their presence she presented to her the ribbon and the jewels of her sister. Munick was in this crowd: she said to him: "You had a wish to fight against me." "Yes, Madam," he replied, "and now it is my duty to fight in your cause." She manifested so much esteem and kindness for him, that soon



after, admiring the genius of this Princess, he offered to communicate to her, in a series of audiences, every circumstance which a long life spent in the practice of the arts, in war, in the administration of affairs, and in exile, had made known to him, respecting all the parts of that vast empire; whether it was that he was actually touched with the generous and unexpectedly gracious reception she had given him, or whether, as is more generally believed, his ambition still prompted him to make this attempt.

That same day, the return to the city was a triumph, and the soldiers, in their rejoicings, were kept under the same strict discipline as in their insurrection.

The Empress was rather overheated; a violent eruption of reddish spots appeared on her skin. She spent a few days in repose to cool herself. This new court presented

sented a spectacle highly worthy of attention; in which the rejoicings for a success so signal did not prevent any one from exercising the most unremitting vigilance; the most exact precaution reigned in the midst of the disorder, in which the courtiers were already trying to regain, by their skill in the arts of a court, the advantage over those officious conspirators, elated by the service they had just rendered; in which the different ranks of royal favour, not being yet ascertained, every one wished to appear what he had a pretension to become.

It was during those early days that the Princess d'Aschekof, entering the apartment of the Empress with a liberty rather too familiar, perceived, with astonishment, Orlof on a long chair, with his leg uncovered, and the Empress herself dressing a contusion which he had received on that leg.



leg. The Princess used the freedom to expostulate with her on such an excess of kindness; and, soon afterwards, on seeing more clearly how the case stood, she assumed the tone of a severe censor. Her projects of liberty, her eagerness to take a lead in state affairs; the intelligence received from foreign countries, in which the honour of the conspiracy was universally ascribed to her, whereas Catharine wished it to appear, that she had been elevated to the throne by election, and had perhaps actually persuaded herself that this was the case; in a word, the whole taken together, gave high offence; and her disgrace was already resolved on, during the days of a bright sunshine of favour, which was granted to keep up appearances.

It was not long before Orlof engaged general attention. That tender familiarity which is the consequence of an attachment

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ment of long standing, was observed to exist between the Empress and this man, who was till that time unknown. The astonishment of the court was extreme. The grandees, many of whom believed that they had acquired rights over the heart of their Sovereign, had no conception that, notwithstanding his very obscurity, this rival could have escaped them, and they perceived, with the most violent indignation, that they had been labouring merely to exalt him. Whether it was boldness on his part, or a formed design to reduce his rivals to silence, or a premeditated concert between his mistress and him, to justify the grandeur she designed to lavish on him, he had the insolence to say to her, at a public dinner, " That he was absolute master of " the guards, and that to dethrone her, he " had but to speak the word." Every one present was highly offended, indignant replies



plies were made by some; but such good servants were but indifferent courtiers; they ruined themselves, and the ambition of Orlof overleaped all bounds.

The city of Moscow, the capital of the Empire, received the news of the revolution in a manner which gave much uneasiness. It is in this great city that the Muscovite nation does in reality reside, Petersburg being only the residence of the court. Five regiments composed the garrison, and the governor, having caused to be given to each soldier twenty rounds of shot, assembled them on the great square of the ancient palace of the Czars, an old citadel called the Cremeline, built four centuries ago, and which was the first cradle of the Muscovite power. Hither he summoned all the people, who, alarmed at the distribution of the cartridges, but at the same time attracted by curiosity, came flocking

flocking from all parts, and entered in as great a crowd as the fortress was sufficient to contain. The governor then read aloud the manifesto, by which the Empress announced her accession to the throne, and the fall of her husband; and when he had done reading it, he cried out: "Long live the Empress Catharine the second;" but all this immense crowd, and the five regiments, observed a profound silence. He repeated the same exclamation; the same silence continued. He was interrupted only by a hollow murmuring of the soldiers, who muttered among themselves, that the regiments of guards should dispose of the throne at their pleasure. The governor earnestly pressed the officers who surrounded him, to join in the acclamation; and they re-commenced together the shout of "Long live the Empress," trembling all the while for fear of



being massacred by the soldiers and the people, and immediately orders were given for the troops to separate.

Six days had now elapsed since the revolution, and this great event appeared to be entirely finished, without any act of violence having been committed, which could produce odious impressions. Peter was confined in a pleasant villa called Robschak, six leagues distant from Petersburg. On the road he had requested to have some cards, of which he constructed a kind of fort, saying at the same time, "I shall see no other while I live." On his arrival at this country seat, he had made a request to have his violin, his dog, and his negro.

But the soldiers were astonished at what they had done; they could not imagine by what enchantment it was that they had been so far carried away, as to dethrone the grandson of Peter the Great, to place  
his

his crown on the head of a female German. The greater part of them, without design and without any idea, had been hurried along by the movements of their companions; and each of them, shrinking back into his own littleness, after the pleasure of disposing of a crown had evaporated, retained no feeling but that of remorse. The sailors, who had not been in the least degree concerned in the insurrection, openly reproached the guards, in the public houses, with having sold their Emperor for beer. Pity, which pleads the cause of the worst of criminals, made its voice to be heard in every heart. One night a troop of soldiers, attached to the Empress, assembled in a riotous manner, through a false alarm, exclaiming, "that their mother was in danger." It was necessary to awake her, that they might have a sight of her. The following night, another tumult arose,



still more alarming. So long as the life of the Emperor left a pretext for disquietude, it was believed that there could be no tranquility.

One of the counts Orlof, for, from the first day, this title had been given them, that same soldier, nicknamed the *Balafré*, who had suppressed the billet of the Princess D'Aschekof, and one named Teplof, who had risen from the meanest employments, by a singular art of destroying his rivals, presented themselves together before this unhappy prince : they announced to him, on their entrance, that they were come to dine with him, and, according to the custom in Russia, glasses of brandy were brought in before the repast. That which the Emperor drank, was a glass of poison. Whether it was that they were in haste to carry the news of their own exploit, or whether the very horribility of the deed prompted

prompted them to hurry it to a conclusion, a moment after they poured out for him a second glass. Already his entrails were on fire, and the atrocity of their physiognomies exciting his suspicion, he refused this glass: they employed violence, to force it down his throat, and he, in repelling them. In this dreadful struggle, in order to stifle his cries, which now began to be heard at a distance, they threw themselves upon him, seized him by the throat, and threw him down; but as he defended himself with all the strength which the last despair communicates, and as they avoided giving him any wound, beginning to be afraid on their own account, they called to their assistance two officers who had the charge of his person, and who were at that moment without, at the gate of his prison. One of these was the youngest of the princes Baratinski, and  
the



the other was named Potemkin, a youth of about seventeen. They had displayed so much zeal in the conspiracy, that notwithstanding their extreme youth, they had been entrusted with the command of this guard. They ran in, and three of these murderers bound a napkin tight round the neck of the unfortunate Emperor, whilst Orlof, with his two knees, pressed upon his breast and stopped his breath, in this manner they strangled him, and he remained lifeless in their hands.

It is not known with any certainty, what share the Empress had in accomplishing this event; but it is an undoubted fact, that the same day on which it happened, as this Princess was sitting down to dinner with a great deal of gaiety, that same Orlof entered, with his hair all dishevelled, covered with sweat and dust, his clothes torn, his physiomy agitated, and filled  
with

with horror and precipitation. On his entrance, his glaring and disturbed eyes sought those of the Empress. She arose in silence, and went into a closet whither he followed her, and a few moments afterwards, she ordered Count Panin to be called, whom she had already named her minister; she informed him that the Emperor was dead, and consulted him on the manner in which this death should be announced to the public. Panin advised her to let one night pass, and to publish the news of it the next day, as if it had been received during the night-time. Having agreed to follow this advice, the Empress re-entered with the same countenance, and continued her dinner with the same gaiety. The next day, when it was reported that Peter was dead in consequence of a hemorrhoidal colic, she appeared  
bathed



bathed in tears, and published her grief by an edict.

The body was carried back to Petersburg to be exposed there. The face was black, and the neck torn. In spite of these horrible marks, in order to lull asleep those emotions which were beginning to cause alarm, and to prevent the possibility of any impostor, on a future day, disturbing the empire under his name, it was left for three days exposed to all the people, habited simply in the dress of a Holsteinese officer. His soldiers, now become free, but all of them disarmed, mingled themselves among this crowd, and on beholding their sovereign, their air was expressive of pity, of contempt, and a kind of regret mixed with shame.

They were immediately afterwards embarked, in order to be carried back to their own

country; but, to complete their cruel destiny, almost all of those unhappy wretches perished in a storm. A few of them had saved themselves from the wreck, on the rocks adjoining to the sea-coast; but were there swept away by the billows, while the commandant of Cronstadt was sending to Petersburg, to ask permission to give them assistance.

The Empress was in haste to cause all the relations of the deceased Emperor to depart for Holstein; but she sent them back with honour, and even gave the government of that dutchy to Prince George. Biren, who had ceded to this Prince his rights to the dutchy of Courland, saw himself, by this removal, re-established in his pretensions; and the Empress, wishing to destroy the then reigning Prince, that she might exercise the sole dominion over it, and that she might have



no obstacle to her projects upon Poland, not knowing what to do with such a man at her court as Biren, she sent him back to assume the government in that sovereignty. On hearing the news of the revolution, Poniatouski, believing her to be now at liberty, was going to fly and present himself before her; but, restrained by more prudent considerations, he advanced no farther than the frontiers, where he remained, expecting every moment permission to repair to Petersburg. He had, ever since his departure, given proofs of a passion the most constant. We might adduce a singular instance of the ardor of his attachment. This young man, having left Russia with precipitation, had it not in his power, in a country where the arts are so little cultivated, to procure a portrait of his mistress, but was able, from memory, and, if I may so express myself, by dictating to the

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the artist, to procure a painting which bore a perfect resemblance to her. She always knew, by flattering his passion, how to keep him at a distance; and, in a short time, she employed the Russian armies, who are desirous on all occasions to sojourn in Poland, to give him the crown of that kingdom. She engaged the Prince d'Anhalt-Zerbst, her brother, not to serve under any power: but she did not allow him to come to her court, avoiding, with extreme attention, every thing which could recal to the minds of the Russians that she was a foreigner, and excite an apprehension of their falling back under the German yoke. Every sovereign hastened to acknowledge her: one excepted, the Emperor of China, who has vast frontiers in common with Russia: he refused to receive her ambassadors, and conveyed to her this determination, that he would have with her neither alli-



ance, nor commerce, nor any communication whatever.

One of her first concerns was to recall the old chancellor Bestuchef, who, then taking honour to himself from his very exile, filled the whole court with portraits of himself in his habit of disgrace. She punished, but not rigorously, the Frenchman Bressan, who had warned the Emperor of his danger; she permitted him to retain his fortune, and appeared only to satisfy the jealousy of the courtiers by depriving him of the ribbon of the third order of the Empire. She was not slow in giving Count Schouvalof to understand that he must disappear, and, with a barbarous pleasantry, she ordered to present to this favorite of the deceased Empress, an old negro buffoon, a favorite of the late Emperor. After having begun to re-establish order in every department of the state, she went to Moscow

Moscow to be consecrated in the chapel of the ancient Czars. That capital beheld her without earnestness and without joy. When she passed through the streets, the people retired, but her son was always surrounded by a crowd. There were even conspiracies formed against her. Of these the Piedmontese Odart was the discoverer: he betrayed all his ancient friends, who already dissatisfied with the Empress, had entered into the new plots; the only recompense he demanded was money. To all the propositions which the Empress made to him of raising him to dignities, his uniform reply was, "Madam, give me money," and, when he had obtained it, he returned to his own country.

She recalled to court, after six months had passed, the same Goudowitz, who had manifested so strong an attachment to the Emperor, and he saw his fidelity recompensed



pensed by the advances of the handsomest women there. She granted to the *frail* Woronsof, her unworthy rival, permission to come to Moscow, and live amidst her family, where she found her sister the Princess d'Aschekof, with whom all that remained of an exploit so brilliant was a pregnancy, a sullen indignation, and a melancholy knowledge of mankind.

The whole security of this reign seemed to be confided to the hands of the Orlofs alone. The favorite soon undermined the grand master of artillery, Villebois, and obtained for himself that place and the regiment. The Balafre remained in a regiment of guards, with a commanding influence over the whole corps; and a third brother got the first place in the senate. A bloody catastrophe having terminated the days of the unfortunate Ivan, the Empress had no dread of being supplanted in the throne

throne, except by her own son, against whom she appeared to have rendered herself perfectly secure, by confiding the principal administration of affairs to Count Pannin, who had always been entrusted with the education of the young Prince. The credit of this minister, serving as a counterpoise, to the power of Orlof, the court was divided into two parties, the remains of two conspiracies; and the Empress, between these two parties, ruled, of herself, with so much glory, that the fame of her administration attracted from Europe and Asia a numerous people into her states.

LETTER



LETTER SECOND\*,  
TO THE  
COUNTESS D'EGMONT.

MADAM,

SOME persons have started doubts respecting the authenticity of this history. This is the only kind of criticism which the historian feels it his duty to refute; and I conceive it to be incumbent on me to justify, in your eyes, the protection which you have afforded to my work.

Permit me, Madam, to recal a few facts to your remembrance. When it was first noised abroad, that such a work was in existence, several individuals, who carried on a correspondence with the Russian Em-

\* The first Letter to the Countess d'Egmont serves as a preface to this history. See page v.

press,

press, were alarmed for her reputation. You well know the measures which they pursued; and, when they perceived that all the offers which they made me, and which became every day more considerable, were of no avail, one of them imagined that by making use of your authority, he should obtain his end; I can say, in full confidence, with the friend of Gracchus; "If she had spoken the word, I had obeyed." What is the result of all their attempts? The assurance which you possess of having in your own hands the deposition of a witness who is incorruptible.

For you alone, Madam, this work was composed; none of those weighty motives which can engage a man of intrepidity to publish anecdotes generally unknown, actuated me to assume the pen; and still less, an indiscreet zeal for truth, no partiality, no intrigue of any kind. I could

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have,



have, without the imputation of weakness, and without remorse, sacrificed it to my personal security, had I conceived that security endangered; but I felt an invincible reluctance to sacrifice it to any other interest whatever. With horror I have beheld the laurels withering on the brow of a writer of the fifteenth century, who made the Princes of his day purchase his silence. Seduction is not easily discouraged; she imagined that the vanity of an author was a stronger passion in my breast than that of interest; that it was necessary to tempt me by these two passions united. It insinuated the possibility of publishing my manuscript with the alteration of a few facts, or even of permitting them to be altered without my making any complaint. Indignation dictated my reply, and I broke off all connection with emissaries who could make such a proposition. You, Madam,

Madam, and the Count d'Egmont, are well acquainted with all these circumstances. What have those persons, who endeavour to persuade the world that the whole of this narrative is a fiction, to oppose to this? Would a man, capable of inventing, or falsifying at will, the anecdotes related in this history, conduct himself as I have done? And has my conduct no other principle, but the partiality of a writer of romances, for the creatures of his own imagination?

The reading of this work soon dissipated the uneasiness which the first report of its existence had occasioned. The extreme impartiality which pervades the narration, proved a singular advantage to me. The partisans of the Russian Empress, and those who do not regard this Princess in so very favourable a point of view, have equally discovered in the recital, fresh motives to



confirm them in the opinions which they had adopted, and I have had as advocates with the Empress herself, some of her most decided partisans.

But let us examine the criticisms on which my accusation is founded. The following is one which has been most frequently repeated; the proverbial expression, "What had to we do in this galley?" is, they allege, a pleasantry purely French, and could never have been found in common use among the Russian ladies. By this sagacious observation, the authors of it have only displayed their ignorance both of Russia and of the manners of the people of that country; since it is evident, they know not that our dramatic pieces are every day represented on the theatres of Petersburgh, and even in the French language.

I related this stroke of humor, because it

serves

serves to depict characters and manners; but there is another in which I have indulged myself respecting the suspected connections of Count Poniatouski; and I frankly own, that on the first glance this appears to savour much more of the historian than of the history; it may be alleged, that in this instance I have chosen Petronius for a model, rather than Tacitus; you yourself have declared against this stroke of playsomeness. I however will presume to justify it, in opposition even to you, on introducing that young Polonese on the stage. In order to shed a degree of lustre on the recital of a love affair, and to keep up the attention of the reader, it was necessary to announce that a crown was to become the price of this adventure. But the high elevation which Count Poniatouski actually attained, would have inspired the loftiest idea of him; it would have



have raised an expectation for the sequel of the narrative, of an interest which should have had him for its object. One of the greatest advantages of the familiar style which I have adopted, was that of employing, on this occasion, playsomeness and pleasantry, in order to leave that personage in his natural mediocrity, at the same time that I was announcing all the importance of this narration.

I might discuss the motives which have induced a few individuals to exert themselves to render this history suspected; I could make it appear, that the most dangerous of my critics, I say the most dangerous, because he was the most powerful, knew nothing of Russia, nor of the Russians, nor even of my performance itself. Above all, I might, in imitation of every ancient historian, maintain, that a person worthy of credit, and who does not hesitate

tate to publish his name to the world, has an incontestable right to be considered as an authority, when he relates events of which he was an eye-witness, and the particulars of which he collected on the very spot where they took place. But if more authorities are still called for, the number would only embarrass me.

In fact, among the frequent readings of this narrative which I have been obliged to give, all those which were attended by persons intimately acquainted with the events, so far from discovering the slightest disposition to contradict me, have furnished me with fresh authorities.

I need not remind you, Madam, of my having read it in your presence to the Duke de Choiseul, a man who had the most accurate information of every event which passed in Europe during the period of his administration, and to the Baron de Breteuil,



Breteuil, who is more than once personally indicated in the work, and to whom the Piedmontese Odart made the singular declaration which I have related; in a word, who is thoroughly acquainted with every person and every fact mentioned in my performance.

To call in the testimony of the King of Sweden on the subject of a revolution, would be to quote the authority of a master; he is much more versant in matters of this kind, than all my critics put together. But what is more essential to the proofs which I wish to discuss, the deceased King, his father, had been the preceptor of Peter III, and afterwards was indebted to him for his crown; the Court of Sweden was the only one which had generosity enough to go into mourning on the death of that unfortunate Emperor. A union, cemented by motives of gratitude, and of political interest

terest, had rendered him peculiarly attentive to that event. This Prince, who during his residence at Paris, connected himself with you, Madam, in a friendship which does equal honour to you both, told me in the presence of the Count de Breutz, who is at this day his ambassador at the Court of France, and of the Count de Lewenhaupt, field-marshal in the French service, that the relation transmitted to the Swedish senate, was strictly conformable to my narrative. He informed me, that the King, his father, had chosen as the most proper persons to superintend the education of Peter III, the two virtuous individuals of whom I have made mention. In addition to this, he said, that while his education was going forward, there was not the slightest probability, that Peter was ever to be called to the throne of the Russian empire; that the House of Holstein expected



to see him ascend the throne of Sweden, and that with the design of obtaining the suffrages of the Swedish nation in his behalf, with the greater facility, his education had received a republican cast. Thus he has confirmed in a manner which cannot be controverted, every circumstance which I have related respecting the education of the Czar, and the manner in which I have attempted to explain a character so unaccountable.

In the whole compass of history, we are presented with only one character which bears any similarity to his. It is that of Antiochus Epiphanis, who, on some occasions, appearing to lose sight of the absolute authority which he possessed, went about the streets and public squares of Antioch, soliciting the suffrages of the lowest orders of the people, to be elevated to some petty magistracy, and who afterwards  
 caused

caused a curule chair to be brought into the public market places, from whence he adjusted the differences of the meanest of the populace. According to historians, he blended the most sumptuous magnificence, with the lowest arts of popularity; of undaunted bravery, possessing talents for war, and a knowledge of the arts, he continually prostituted his talents, his knowledge, his rank, and his dignity sometimes in shops, in forges, in work-houses, sometimes mingling in the most contemptible amusements, in which he delighted to make a spectacle of himself, in the midst of pomp, the most extravagant. He assumed by turns, the manners and the personage of all conditions, and of all characters, so that neither he himself, nor any other person really knew what manner of man he was.

It is somewhat remarkable, that this singular character may be explained precisely



in the same manner, in which I have unfolded that of Peter III. This Asiatic despot was of Greek extraction. In his youth, he had spent some time at Athens, and still a longer period at Rome, where he was detained as an hostage. Is it not extremely probable, that during the time he passed in these two Republics, he had acquired that habit of equality, that ambition of distinguishing himself by a personal merit? Impressions received in his youth, kept up on a weak mind, but of lively and easy conception, had produced that ridiculous compound of reason, of talents, and of absurdity.

Both Antiochus Epiphanis, and the Czar, Peter III, had received an education far too enlarged for their genius; this is not the calamity to which princes are commonly exposed in their infancy. It appears to me to be an undoubted fact, that the

the contradiction apparent in every character, might be thus explained, provided you could discover among the generality of mankind, the circumstances which produced the liveliest impressions on their minds in their younger years.

But I return to the new testimonies, which I can easily adduce in support of the truth of my relation. The Count de Vielhorski, whom we see at the present moment, discharging in France with so much zeal and sagacity, the difficult office of Envoy from the Polish Confederacy, was present when this narrative was read to his Royal Highness Prince Charles of Saxony, Duke of Courland. This Prince had a personal interest in being accurately informed respecting the intrigues of the Court of Russia. His crown depended upon it, as the event has demonstrated. He was in person at Petershoff, on the  
very



very night that Peter III surprised Poniatowski, on the point of entering the apartment of the Grand Dutchess. On the same day, he dined with the husband and wife after their reconciliation, and he has in the most positive manner attested the truth of this anecdote, and of every other which has been related in the former part of this history.

I have found, nevertheless, with respect to this anecdote, and I acknowledge it with the utmost frankness, a considerable variation in another recital. I have it from a gentleman who pretends to have played an important part in that scene. The person I mean, is Count Brancki, the friend, the confidant, the defender of the King of Poland. According to his account, the Grand Duke's resentment was not easily appeased. After having released Poniatowski, the Grand Duke not only persisted in

in his determination to have him dismissed from that court with infamy, but resolved on dissolving his marriage with the Grand Dutchess, and on having her shut up in a convent. He had her conveyed to a small house near Oranienbaum, and kept close prisoner. The sentinels placed around it, had orders to suffer no one to approach it, except a certain number of courtiers, entirely devoted to the Grand Duke. This Prince, jealous and irritated, was in that house, and breathed nothing but vengeance.

Count Brancki, as he himself relates, undertook to save the Grand Dutchess. A perpetual rivalry, in the career of social competition, had openly embroiled him in Poland with Count Poniatouski. They behaved to each other at Petersburgh, with extreme coldness. Brancki had come to that court, in the suite of Prince Charles; and



and this was a new ground of alienation between those two Polish young men, as Prince Charles was doing his utmost to procure the recal of Count Poniatouski, whose intrigues were giving uneasiness to the house of Saxony. Brancki, however, did not feel himself bound to second the uneasiness of that house, in opposition to the fortune of a young gentleman, his fellow citizen and his equal; but habituated from childhood, to be the rival of Poniatouski, he endeavoured to render himself more agreeable to the Grand Dutchess than the other was. He was in hopes of finding opportunities to this purpose, by assiduously paying court to the Grand Duke. He entertained that prince on his favourite subjects, sieges, battles, military plans. A single campaign, which his youth had permitted him to serve, qualified him to reason upon it with sufficient intelligence,

intelligence, for the capacity of the Grand Duke, who frequently carried him to his little fortress, drilled the men in his presence, and consulted him respecting all his military projects. Brancki, on being informed of what had passed at Petershoff, and of the dangers to which the Grand Dutchess was exposed, went in quest of Poniatouski. On his escape from this unfortunate rencounter, he had returned to Petersburgh, he there waited, in the utmost consternation, the disposal of his destiny, without taking any step whatever. Brancki advised him to begin with writing to the Grand Duke's mistress; and this letter being written, the effect of which was intended to be a favourable impression on the mind of the Grand Duke himself, he proposed to conduct him to the presence of that prince, at the pavilion in which the Grand Dutchess was guarded. It was a bold undertaking, and the teme-



rity of Brancki prevailed over the timid  
 circumspection of his fortunate rival. The  
 two young Polonese, then, pursue together  
 circuitous paths. On coming near the pa-  
 vilion, Poniatouski remained concealed in  
 the thickest of the wood. Brancki ad-  
 vances alone, resolved, let the consequences  
 be what it might, to present himself sud-  
 denly to the eyes of the Grand Duke,  
 without being announced, and determined  
 to kill, were it necessary, any sentinel who  
 should endeavour to oppose his passage.  
 He was more fortunate, and appeared un-  
 expectedly, as he wished, in the Grand  
 Duke's presence. This prince, in asto-  
 nishment, demands how he had got thi-  
 ther. By a stratagem of war, replies  
 Brancki; and immediately falls a relating  
 to him the pretended artifices which he had  
 employed to elude the sentinels. His dis-  
 course and his audacity charmed the Grand  
 Duke; and Brancki, after having com-  
 pletely

pletely insinuated himself into his good graces, by such kind of conversation, seized the favourable moment of representing to him, how unjust it would be to ruin the Grand Dutchess, for the folly of a young man, who, perhaps, was in love with her, without any return of affection on her part: in a word, he wound him up to such a pitch, as to make him send for Poniatouski, and engaged him to conduct the culprit to the apartment of the Grand Dutchess, to intreat her forgiveness of his foolish attempt of the preceding night.

Brancki adds, that he himself had, not long after, an interview with the Grand Dutchess. He told her: "that it was not  
" Count Poniatouski whom he meant to  
" serve, but herself alone, and from a sen-  
" timent very opposite to any design of  
" serving Poniatouski." He addressed her, on that occasion, in a high strain of gallantry and passion, which were neither



accepted nor rejected; and he considers that adventure, as the source of the high fortune to which he has attained, amidst the calamities of his country, and which leaves him, henceforth, nothing short of a throne to aspire after.

This detail, which I have immediately from Count Brancki, on the supposition of its being most conformable to truth, if examined with attention, does not contradict that which I have given, on the authority of eye-witnesses, of the confidants of the Empress, of the account given by the favourite who, at that time, governed the empire. Peter was not a man to persevere long in the same resolution. It is extremely possible, that, after having promised to repair the explosion which his jealousy and his anger had, in the first transports, given to this adventure, he should still have felt returning fits of indignation, and desires of vengeance; and  
where

where is the stoic, who, in such a rencounter, could have been proof against those alternatives? The acknowledgment which the Grand Dutchess made to her husband, in my relation, is assuredly consistent with the character of that Princess. The turn which Brancki assumes, in speaking to that Prince, is not so, and ought not to be so. I could cheerfully appeal, on this particular, to all those whom the chances of social life may have thrown into similar conjunctures.

I know not what stress the reader may be disposed to lay on the testimony of the Piedmontese Odart. I will not even conceal, that this Piedmontese, having returned to his native country, according to his declared intention, was, not long ago, struck dead by lightning. But before his death, the Chevalier d'Aris, of the Academy of Sciences, and M. de Trudaine, had met him in the city of Nice, which he had  
chosen



chosen for the place of his retreat; and if we must speak of him, conformably to his own opinions, his conduct was then as honourable as his fortune. Both of these gentlemen had a distinct recollection of this history, and Odart's account of the matter, completely confirmed to them the truth of the whole.

Some persons, it is true, who were acquainted with the Princess d'Aschekof, when on her travels, did not distinguish in her the young Princess who had interested them, in hearing my narrative. I entreat them to observe, that she is there painted at the age of eighteen, and that I myself have announced, before I conclude, the change which her disgrace produced upon her. She feels already, if I may use the expression, that melancholy undeception, which is the ordinary fruit of a tardy experience. She has lost, at an age so tender, all the illusions of fortune, of friendship, and

and of glory. Humiliation has blighted that ardent and generous character, which prompted her to sacrifice her family, which inspired her with enthusiasm and credulity, which, in her first emotions of dissatisfaction with the Empress, drew from her this open declaration: " I thought I was acting right, but I deceived myself." The long disgrace which she has undergone, and the frightful sentiment of the slavery to which she is subjected, have soured her temper, without her daring henceforth to wear the appearance of discontent. This is her picture at the moment I am writing. She still retains the same ardor of spirit which carried her to the barracks, which made her assume a man's dress, and march at the head of an army. I have nowhere spoken of her beauty, Her age, and she then possessed all the lustre of it, supplied the place of beauty, at the time I have painted her.

I could



I could add a multitude of other facts to a letter, already too long ; but it will be impossible for any thing to convince those who are not convinced by what has been said ; and I believe I have sufficiently justified, in your eyes, a work entirely conceived under your auspices.

I am,

With the most profound respect,

Madam,

Your most humble

and most obedient Servant,

RULHIÈRE.

Paris, Aug. 25, 1773.



JACOB D. NECHER